THE WORK AND TEACHINGS OF THE EARLIER PROPHETS

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THE WORK AND TEACHINGS OF THE EARLIER PROPHETS

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ISRAEL AND JUDAH AFTER THE DIVISION OF THE HEBREW EMPIRE.

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THE WORK AND TEACHINGS OF THE EARLIER PROPHETS

BY

CHARLES FOSTER KENT

Woolsey Professor of Biblical Literature
in Yale University

AND

ROBERT SENECA SMITH

General Secretary of the
Young Men's Christian Association
of Yale University

"For what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God."

NEW YORK

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

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ROBERT SENECA SMITH.

PREFACE.

The Hebrew prophets are unquestionably the most important figures in the pre-Christian religious history of the human race. Through their work and teachings they were God's agents in moulding the life and thoughts of their own age. They also powerfully influenced their fellow teachers, the priests, sages and psalmists of ancient Israel and thus left their imprint upon every page of the Old Testament. Moreover, they were the immediate spiritual forerunners of the Divine Teacher; for they proclaimed many of the great religious and ethical principles which, in their perfected and more personal form, are the central teachings of the Gospel. Hence an intelligent appreciation of the Hebrew prophets is the open door to the understanding of both the Old and the New Testaments. And yet the prophets are, on the whole, the most misunderstood of all the world's great leaders. This widespread popular ignorance is chiefly due to the fact that they have not been studied in the light of the significant crises and conditions amid which they lived and worked. Each prophet has a direct, vital message from God to the present age; but it was first proclaimed in the language and historical setting of his own times.

The purpose of these studies is to enable the student of to-day to become personally acquainted with these inspired prophets of the past. Do not regard them as relics of antiquity whose worth is buried with their bones. Think of them rather as living men with throbbing hearts and tense muscles. You cannot hope to know them unless you associate with them. The studies have been arranged to make possible a daily communion with them. Aim to dwell with these prophets each day and to become acquainted with the environment in which they lived, and the situations which they were forced to face; study their methods of work and their habits of thought and expression; read their writings aloud until their words and style are familiar; picture each one of them to yourself in imagination, and search with reverent and thoughtful hearts for the great eternal principles which the Divine Father was continually revealing to and through them. Then you will indeed

feel that you have walked and talked with these men of God, and through their eyes have caught clear visions of His just and gracious purpose.

It is impossible to use these studies apart from the Bible. The references are the essential part of each day's work; the subject matter of the studies is intended only as a suggestive guide and commentary. The American Revised Version of the Bible is necessary, as the references are based upon it. The other reference books are important, and their frequent use will illuminate the matter under discussion.

To one of the illustrious modern disciples of the prophets, Professor George Adam Smith, D. D., we have been under constant obligation, both for his method of treatment and his illuminating interpretation, found in his commentaries on *Isaiah* and the *Book of the Twelve Prophets*. The translations incorporated in the text are from Kent's *Students' Old Testament,* Vol. III (now in preparation). We wish to express our gratitude also to the Reverend Morgan Millar of Yale, who has offered many valuable suggestions and corrections.

C. F. K.
R. S. S.

Yale University, May 1906.

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STUDY I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

First Day. The Work of Moses.

1. When the forefathers of Israel left their Semitic kinsmen in the desert and migrated to Palestine, and later to Egypt, it is reasonably certain that they carried with them an inherited store of traditions, customs and beliefs. In their earliest stories we have evidence that certain customs were regarded with favor, others with disfavor. Examine Gen. 20:9; 29:26; 34:7; 37.22.

2. When Moses was called to lead this people out of its Egyptian bondage, his task was primarily the development of beliefs and customs already existing. "Moses' work," says Cornill, "does not appear as something absolutely new, but as a supplement to something already existing among the people" (Cornill, *Prophets of Israel,* pp. 16-26).

3. But Moses was far superior to the men of his time; and the stories that have been preserved in the Old Testament aid in determining the basis of that superiority. What experiences led him to assume his great responsibility? Read Ex. 2:12-15; 3:1-12. Two factors are combined in Moses' call; cf. 3:6-8. Study in Ex. 4:10-12 the effect of this call upon Moses, and determine the source of his power. If your heart ever aches because of the cry of the needy or the despised, and your eyes behold a vision of God's infinite love and tenderness, put the two together; they are God's method of calling you to His service.

4. The work of Moses was more than that of a mere lawgiver. The different forms of his activity are described in the following passages:

(a) Judge. Ex. 18:13-16. As judge, Moses established principles which became the basis of later laws. (b) Organizer. Ex. 18:17-26. (c) Statesman. Ex. 4:29—5:3. (d) Interpreter of the oracle. Ex. 33:7-11. (e) Prophet. Hos. 12:13. Compare also Num. 12:6-8, where Moses appears as the noblest type of prophet.

5. The work of Moses, then, was the deliverance of Israel from its Egyptian bondage; the union of many clans into a single nation; the instruction of the primitive race in the elementary principles of right and wrong; and finally the placing of a powerful emphasis upon the necessity of loyalty to Jehovah.

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Second Day. Deborah and Samuel.

1. The next account of prophetic activity is that describing the work of Deborah, who summons and leads her scattered, dejected countrymen to victory over the Canaanites. What position did she hold among her people? See Judg. 4:4-5; 5:7. Read rapidly Judg. 4:6-24. To what did Deborah owe her success as a leader. Judg. 4:14; 5:12-13. What is the conception of the character of God there found? Judg. 5:1-5, 31. To obtain a clear picture of her courageous faith and holy enthusiasm, read once more the portions of the war-song which commemorate the victory of the Israelites over the Canaanites. Judg. 5:1-13, 19-27, 31. For a new translation, cf. KENT, *Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament*, pp. 91-93.

2. Samuel was a man of God who, like Deborah, was in close touch with the men and needs of his age. He was, under Divine guidance, searching for a deliverer to lead the Hebrews against their oppressors, the Philistines. In the young Benjamite chieftain Saul, he recognized the natural qualities of physical strength, patriotism and courage, which, when aroused, fitted him to be Israel's savior. Read I Sam. 9:25; 10:1, noting how Samuel endeavored to impress Saul with the fact that he, Saul, was divinely called to undertake a great task for the people's welfare. As Moses was the noble instrument by which the Hebrew nation was brought into being, in like manner Samuel was the great patriot-prophet who at the critical moment called the Israelitish kingdom into existence by anointing Saul.

3. Moses, Deborah, and Samuel each made clear the power and purposes of God to their countrymen. They saw with God-given insight the needs of their day and the way such needs could be met, and, above all, at the critical moment they had the courage to act. Through personal effort and unselfish devotion to human needs and the light which God gave them they became captains courageous and noble leaders of their fellows from slavery to victory. For these reasons, their own and later generations recognized them as true prophets. For the historical setting read KENT, *History of the Hebrew People*, Vol. I, pp. 36-44, 74-78, 113-122.

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Third Day. The Prophetic Societies and the Work of Gad and Nathan.

1. Thus far, among the Hebrew people, the prophet has fulfilled his task as a solitary individual. Now a new order appears, an order which, as early as the time of Samuel, is inaugurated by bands of men animated by a sort of contagious religious enthusiasm. How are they described in I Sam. 10:5-13? This is the first reference to their activity. These men were called "Sons of the Prophets," not because their fathers were actual prophets, but because they were associated with certain great prophets.

2. This manifestation of ecstatic prophecy came at the time when Israel's patriotism and religious feeling were aroused against the Philistines. These bands of prophets were ardent devotees of the national movement. They were enthusiasts for the deliverance of their nation. The terrible Philistine bondage under which Israel was living explains, no doubt, their patriotic frenzy. They believed, however, that deliverance could be accomplished one way only. Read I Sam. 10:6; I Kings 22:5-6. Should religion and patriotism ever be separated?

3. These bands of enthusiasts continued in Israel as late as the time of Jeremiah, but they were on a far lower plane than the true prophets. Their numbers greatly increased, and, dependent upon charitable gifts for livelihood, they often prophesied in accordance with the views held by those they served. For the contempt in which they were later held, cf. Amos 7:14; Micah 3:5-7.

4. Look now at two representatives of genuine prophetism in the court of David: Gad and Nathan, men who dared to be true to their convictions. Read the account of Gad's activity in I Sam. 22:3-5. What part did he play in the national crisis described in II Sam. 24:15-25?

5. Recall the story of David's adulterous marriage with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, as set forth in II Sam. 11. Then read II Sam. 12:1-13, noting especially:

(a) Nathan's tact. Vss. 1-6.
(b) The source of his authority. Vss. 7-11.
(c) Nathan's courageous denunciation of his king. Vss. 7-12.
(d) David's penitence. Vs. 13.

What is the prophet's conception of God; of the duty of men to God; of the duty of men to their fellows? What relation to God does Nathan hold? Read again vs. 13. What is essential before there can be forgiveness? How far is this early prophetic story in keeping with the principles of the Old Testament law raised by Jesus to commanding authority in Matt. 22:34-40?

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Fourth Day. The Effect of Foreign Alliances Upon Israel and the Disruption of the Kingdom.

1. Under the moulding influence of their political and religious leaders, the Hebrews became, at length, a powerful nation in the Canaanitish world. Although the tribes struggled each with its own problems and sought each its own success, they were finally united against the common Philistine foe by the masterful leadership of Saul and David.

2. When David died, Solomon was made king. Solomon lacked his father's tactful ability. He lacked, also, his father's simplicity; he had high notions as to absolutism, kingly magnificence, and the like, and these he carried out at the cost of national unity. Early in the history of the nation the northern tribes had been separated from the southern by geographical barriers and by differences of disposition. The northern tribes surpassed, in influence and resources, those in the south and looked upon them with little favor. When Solomon, disregarding the northern tribes and devoting the resources they paid into the national treasury to the adornment of his temple and palaces in the south, sought to establish an absolute despotism, they developed a revolutionary spirit which after his death (937 B. C.) resulted in the complete disunion of the Hebrew people. Hereafter we shall find these two Hebrew kingdoms, Israel on the north and Judah on the south, engaged in a desperate struggle for national existence.

3. During the reign of Solomon the civilization of the Hebrews was materially enriched by the absorption of the culture and ideals of the surrounding nations. But this tendency toward an Oriental despotism which disregarded the rights of the individual was fraught with serious dangers. Solomon's marriages with foreign wives constituted more than mere political alliances. They were religious as well. He was compelled to recognize the gods of his allied peoples and to countenance their worship in his own domains.

4. What is Solomon's policy in regard to foreign gods? Read I Kings 11:1-8. The evidences of prophetic activity during this period of disruption are meagre. Determine from the following references the prophetic attitude toward the tendency to Orientalism and the bearing upon this of the revolution under Jeroboam; I Kings 11:26-40; 12:21-24. Consider (1) the political, (2) the social, and (3) the religious effects of the division of the Hebrew empire. Cf. KENT, *History of the Hebrew People*, Vol. II, pp. 24, 25.

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Fifth Day. The Character and Work of Elijah.

1. In 875 B. C., sixty years after the division of the kingdom, Ahab became king of Israel. An able and energetic monarch, he brought together the Hebrew kingdoms in a united struggle against their common foes. In order to strengthen the important alliance with Tyre, which his father had effected, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of an ex-priest of Baal who had made himself king by the murder of his former master. In her honor Ahab erected a temple to Baal at his capital in Samaria.

2. In connection with Ahab's reign Elijah appears. He has been rightly described as one of the most titanic personages of the Old Testament. How did he differ from the ordinary members of the prophetic guilds? What name is given him in I Kings 17:18-24? In whose power does he perform his tasks? I Kings 18:1; 19:9-15.

3. Elijah detected two dangerous evils in Israel's life. One was religious, the other social. Against them he flung himself with all the strength and courage that God had given him. It was in such supreme efforts that the true greatness of Elijah became manifest.

4. Read rapidly the account of the contest on Mount Carmel in I Kings 18:17-40. Note especially verses 18, 21. What is the nature of Israel's sin? What is Elijah's attitude toward Baal? What toward Jehovah? Why was it so dangerous for the Hebrews to worship foreign gods? Read again verses 36, 37. The Hebrews constantly forgot the goodness and mercy of the God whom Moses had taught them to serve. The greatness of the prophets lies in the fact that they knew God and were able to reveal Him as Lord and Father; and this even when the eyes of their countrymen were befogged by indifference and by the sinful worship of other gods.

5. The other evil which Elijah attacked in Israel is described in I Kings 21:1-16. It was despotic disregard of the individual citizen's hereditary right. Read I Kings 21:17-20, 27. Of what two sins does Elijah accuse Ahab in verse 19? Was there not a connection between these abuses of worship and rulership? What were the influences that made the patriotic Ahab a relentless despot? Are such evils interrelated in our modern life? Ahab was at heart a true patriot, but for the sake of national prestige and personal aggrandizement he sacrificed the noblest religious, ethical and social ideals of his race. His success spelled ultimate ruin; so inevitably does the success of any man, party or nation that employs unworthy means to attain even desirable ends.

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Sixth Day. The Character and Work of Elisha.

1. For a whole lifetime Elijah struggled for pure religion and civic righteousness. He achieved neither while he lived. He succeeded, however, in impressing his principles upon some of his followers. Read II Kings 2:7-14, noting especially vss. 9, 13. Elisha is the only prophet in the Bible called to his office by another prophet.

2. Elisha differed from Elijah in personal appearance, in habits of life, and in method of work. Examine II Kings 2:23; I Kings 19:19-21. He was familiar with the customs of city and court life. "With Elijah were associated wonders within the realm of Nature. Elisha, on the other hand, was always found among men, healing their maladies, cleansing their fountains, and advising king and subject. The one used denunciations, the other diplomacy."

3. History has recorded two special fields of activity in Elisha's life. He is known as a miracle-worker; he is also known as the confidant of the king and the friend of the people. What characteristics of the man are suggested by the following passages, and what motives appear to have prompted them? (a) II Kings 4:1-7; (b) II Kings 4:38-44; (c) II Kings 4:8-37; (d) II Kings 5; (e) II Kings 6:8-23.

4. Since the death of Ahab there had been no real change in the religious policy of Israel; the worship of Baal was still tolerated; and Jezebel exercised her old influence. The indignation of the people called for her destruction.

5. At the instigation of Elisha, Jehu, the reckless, fearless, crafty captain of the army, was anointed king. Read I Kings 9:1-3. He was a leader whose taste for blood was not satisfied until the entire family of Ahab and all who sympathized with him were slain. The result of this bloody revolution was the extermination of Baal worship; but Israel was so weakened that the nation barely maintained its existence for the next half century. Elijah's great fight against Baalism was won at a terrible cost.

6. The permanent work of Elisha does not appear to have been that which made the greatest external impression on the history of the nation. Cf. Hosea's reference to Jehu's act, Hos. 1:4. It was by quiet tenderness, by a life that inspired confidence in friend and even foe, by the patriotism that made Joash say of him at his death, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," that Elisha made a lasting impression on his race.

I. WORK OF THE EARLIEST PROPHETS.

Seventh Day. Review of the Work of the Pioneer Prophets.

1. Review briefly the studies of the week with the following questions in mind:

(a) What specific need called forth each of these early Hebrew prophets?

(b) Where did they get their message?

(c) What was their vital message in each case?

(d) How did they differ from other men of their generation?

2. We are prone to regard the Old Testament prophets as men of a nature entirely different from our own, men who were not only specially called by God but also endowed in a peculiar and unknowable way with the power of vision and power for service. Is there any indication in the lives of these early men that they were at first different from their fellows? If there was a difference, was it due to their inborn capacity to see and to serve? Were they ignorant or were they the best informed men of their day? Was their intelligent appreciation of the needs of their day one of the chief factors in opening their eyes to the divine truth? Are trying national and individual experiences God's way of preparing His servants to receive His message? Does God ever fail to give spiritual light to those who earnestly and persistently seek it? Cf. Jesus' promise in Matt. 5:6; 7:7, 8. The Hebrew prophet, however, was called not merely a *seer,* but more commonly a *speaker,* or *God's man.* What other qualities besides receptivity did he therefore require? Are men with the spirit and courage of the Hebrew prophets needed in our modern life?

REFERENCES.

CORNILL, *Prophets of Israel,* pp. 16-36. G. A. SMITH, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Part I, Chap. 2, Section 2. MEN OF THE BIBLE SERIES: *Moses, His Life and Times; Elijah, His Life and Times; Samuel and Saul, Their Lives and Times.* SANDERS and KENT, *The Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 1-10. KENT, *History of the Hebrew People,* Vol. I, pp. 36-44, 74-78, 113-122, 196-206; Vol. II, pp. 24, 25, 46-54, 61-69.

STUDY II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

First Day. The Situation.

1. The Geographical Setting. Where was Amos' home? Amos 1:1. Consult map. Six miles south of Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem lies the ruin-covered hill of Tekoa, where, nearly twenty-seven hundred years ago, Amos lived and guarded his sheep. From its top he looked out upon a dreary and rugged world. Grey limestone hills shut out the view of Jerusalem's towers on the north; to the southeast, down a long slope ragged with rocks and withered herbage, stretched the wilderness of Tekoa; and here at night Amos listened to the howling of the wild beasts as they came to prey upon his flocks. In this silent, savage world, "where life is reduced to poverty and danger; where nature starves the imagination, but excites the faculties of perception and curiosity; with the mountain tops and the sunrise in his face, but above all with Jerusalem so near,—Amos did the work which made him a man, heard the voice of God calling him to be a prophet, and gathered those symbols and figures in which his prophet's message still reaches us with so fresh and so austere an air." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

2. The Historical Setting. Who were the kings of Judah and Israel during Amos' period of activity? Read Amos 1:1. Following the revolution of Jehu in 842 B. C., what great national calamities had overtaken Israel? II Kings 10:31-32; 13:1-3, 7, 22. For a half century the Arameans, under the leadership of Hazael, had carried on a successful campaign for territorial aggrandizement against Israel, and a season of famine and pestilence had impoverished the latter's resources. Under Joash (Amos 1:1; 797-781 B. C.) began the era of prosperity which reached its culmination in the days of Amos. Read II Kings 13:23-25; 14:23, 25, 28. Consult the chronological chart. Joash's successor, Jeroboam II (781-740 B. C.) took advantage of the turn in affairs, not only extending greatly the boundaries of Israel, but occupying also part of Damascus. His victorious armies brought back rich spoil, and by treaty he opened again the doors of commerce. Glance over II Chron. 26:1-15. Uzziah (782-751 B. C.) similarly strengthened Judah. He pushed out to the Red Sea, effectively reorganized his army, and crushed the Philistines. Prosperity and peace reigned throughout the borders of both Israel and Judah; the generation now growing up witnessed a repetition of the golden age of Solomon; agriculture flourished; literature began to appear; commerce and wealth abounded. But there was danger ahead.

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Second Day. The Situation (continued).

1. The Political Situation. Only the men of most penetrating vision detected the cloud on Israel's horizon that betokened the approaching foe. For nearly two centuries and a half after 1100 B. C., Assyria had left Palestine to herself. Resuming the attack in 870 B. C., Assurnacirpal took tribute from Tyre and Sidon; and by the middle of that same century his successor had received tribute from Jehu and had pushed his conquests as far as Damascus. Here Assyria's progress stopped for a half century. But when Tiglath-Pileser III came to the throne in 745 B. C. the former policy of indifference toward Palestine changed to one of open hostility and conquest. Before this foe Israel dared to stand. Ignorant of Assyria's real strength, lured on by Egypt's vain promises of help, and blindly presuming that Jehovah would never deliver His people into the hands of their heathen foes, Israel's leaders were confident of victory.

2. Conclusions of the Prophets. The prophets, however, regarded Assyria's advance in a very different way. Cf. Amos 6:14; Hos. 9:3-6. They saw that Israel's defiant crimes not only stayed Jehovah's protecting hand, but completely unfitted the people to meet the crisis that was impending.

3. The Moral and Social Conditions in Israel. The real disease which the prophets discovered was deep seated in the nation's life. What individual and national sins are attacked in the following passages: Hos. 4:1, 2, 6-13; 8:14; 12:7; Is. 9:8-12? Determine their precise character. Prosperity and peace followed an age of subjection. Through commerce Israel had multiplied her points of contact with the foreign nations from which she derived her material civilization; but with the wealth and refinement thus gained there came also a deterioration of her moral standards. Foreign ideas and ideals were cherished. Religion, externally, took on the form of Canaanitish cults; the most licentious rites were now practised in the sanctuaries of Jehovah. Judges were guilty of receiving bribes; the rich, intent on wealth, forgot the poor; the ruling classes neglected their responsibility; might, not right, held sway. The face of God was obscured by the smoke and blood of sacrifice, and a dangerous and defiant spirit of self-sufficiency pervaded the national life. Like many another nation or individual, Israel, in the time of its greatest prosperity, lost sight of God and its responsibility to Him.

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Third Day. Amos, the Man.

1. What facts about Amos' life and character may be inferred from Amos 1:1; 3:7, 8; 4:1; 7:14, 15? "Amos," says Cornill, "is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit. Shepherd of his stunted sheep, dresser of the sycamores, man of the wilderness, communer with Nature and with his God, what a wonderful spirit!"

2. Near the spot where Amos lived the black tents of the Arabs to-day dot the landscape. "Sometimes a shepherd is seen against the sky, as he stands like a statue on a projecting rock, wrapped in his sheepskin jacket and armed with a stout club, while the goats graze about him. These shepherds are tall and straight, with bright eyes and clearly cut features, and a bearing that betrays a consciousness of strength bred in them by their free and simple life." (H. G. Mitchell; *Amos*, pp. 3, 4.) Such doubtless was the prophet Amos. A shepherd, inured to hardships and strong of limb, he probably visited and saw with his own eyes the cities and lands of which he speaks. Jerusalem was but twelve miles north of Tekoa, and Bethel, with its sanctuary, but twenty-two. Here gathered every year at the annual festivals crowds of people from other lands, Phœnicians, Moabites and Arabs, to exchange their wares for Israel's products. Imagine Amos talking with them and learning their ideas and customs. It was in the great school of observation and experience that he received his education.

3. Amos was a man of convictions. Where had he learned them? Amos 3:3. Note the figures from his desert life. Institutions hallowed by centuries did not blind his vision of truth. If they had lost their significance or practical value he boldly attacked them. He was not afraid to think differently from his fellows. Therefore God found him a ready messenger.

4. Amos looked squarely at the facts. Amos 5:21-23. He did not play with theories. What he spoke about he knew, and the hatred he aroused against himself in Israel was due to the sting of truth. He did not present theories regarding the past or the glories of the future. He drove the wedge of God's judgment straight to the core of Israel's sin.

5. Amos was fearless. Amos 2:6-8; 6:3-8; 7:12-17. He had martyr's stuff in him. With the whole of Israel defying and mocking him, this shepherd-prophet of the south did not fear to let the nation see itself as one brave, true man saw it. Are there men in your city or college who know the truth and dare act? Are you one of them?

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Fourth Day. Amos' Problem and How He Solved It.

1. Amos leaves the simplicity of his shepherd life in Judah. He has seen his vision, and he now enters Israel to proclaim it. He arises at some great religious festival at Bethel and aims his message at the leaders of the people. Around him are gathered curious crowds, arrayed in all the lavish splendor which he had come to denounce, and ready to participate in the perverted religion which he had come to destroy.

2. How shall he win their attention? Read the text of the book, Amos 1:2. Reproduce its thought in your own words. "Jehovah will roar"—the Hebrew means the cry of the lion just as it springs on its prey. Universal destruction is near at hand. Cf. 3:8; Is. 31:4. "Utter" conveys the impression of rolling thunder. On the storm-cloud Jehovah is advancing. "Pastures mourn" when the vegetation dries up; from sheer terror the very sap ceases to flow. Note the forcefulness of these desert figures. A direct arraignment would only increase the people's natural antagonism. Cf. Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4. Amos attacks the sins of Israel's neighboring foes one after another and pronounces their doom in the name of Jehovah. These enemies are Israel's neighbors. Their sins are the atrocities of barbarism, massacre, and sacrilege, condemned by heathen and Israelite alike.

3. Damascus. Consult map. Express in your own language the thought of Amos 1:3-5. These Arameans, the best organized and most formidable of Israel's neighbors, had been excessively cruel in their treatment of the transjordanic Israelites. Note the formula in vs. 3. "Because of three crimes, . . . yea, because of four, I will not revoke it." Concrete numbers are given for the sake of vividness. Jehovah at first forgives, but finally must punish cumulative guilt. "Threshing instruments,"—they were made of iron and studded with sharp basalt teeth. Verse 4 refers to the cruelties of Hazael (842-802 B. C.) when he invaded Gilead. "House of Hazael" is probably the dynasty founded by him. "Eden," verse 5, was perhaps the summer residence of the king of Damascus. For the fulfillment of this doom read II Kings, 16:9. What would be the effect of these threats against Israel's foes upon Amos' hearers? Like the prophet Nathan reciting the story of the poor man's ewe lamb before the royal culprit David, he not only gained the attention of his suspicious hearers, but also led them to assent unconsciously to the universal principles of justice and mercy which he bade them forthwith apply to themselves.

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Fifth Day. Sins Abroad.

1. The Philistines. Consult map. Amos 1:6-8. What sin is denounced in verse 6? These verses apparently refer to inhuman raids for commercial purposes. "Ashdod," vs. 8, was a Philistine fortress on the caravan route between Gaza and Joppa. Vs. 8, the whole Philistine race will be blotted out. Cf. Zeph. 2:4, 7.

2. Tyre. Amos 1:9-10. Tyre stands for the Phœnicians as Gaza for the Philistines in vs. 6. It was famous for its commerce and artistic products. Read II Sam. 5:11. The Syrians are accused of acting as agents in the slave trade. Note that the writer does not restrict himself to the wrongs against Israel; he denounces those against humanity generally. The great destruction of Tyre came in the time of Alexander the Great, when 30,000 of its inhabitants were sold into slavery.

3. Edom. Amos 1:11-12. The Edomites were a powerful people dwelling south of the Dead Sea. David had subdued their land, and during most of the intervening period they had been subject to Judah. "Brother," verse 11; cf. Deut. 23:7, and the stories of Jacob and Esau.

4. Ammon. Amos 1:13-15. The Ammonites, though also reckoned as a brother nation, were less civilized. The hideous practice mentioned in verse 13 was not uncommon in that day. Read II Kings 8:12; Hos. 13:16. The Turks have been guilty of like inhumanity in our own time. "Rabbah," verse 14, was their capital city.

5. Moab. Read Amos 2:1-3. The Moabites were a wealthy and prosperous people. The greatest reverence was paid in ancient times to the tombs of the dead; but the Moabites not only violated the sanctity of the tomb, they burned the bones of the king to lime. The nation is pictured as dying under the attack of its foes. The roar, verse 2, is that of a great multitude—the conquerors, evidently the Assyrians.

6. Judah. Amos 2:4-5. Of what sins is Judah guilty? Even Jerusalem, the capital of Amos' own country, and the site of Solomon's far-famed temple, will not escape destruction.

7. What ends has Amos attained by his tactful and forcible introduction? The three principles thus established are (1) that all nations are alike accountable for their acts to Jehovah; (2) that He has been long suffering, but will, indeed must, punish the deliberate wrongdoer; (3) that each nation is responsible in direct proportion to its opportunity and enlightenment. Are these fundamental truths ever lost sight of by the disciples of the prophets and Jesus to-day?

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Sixth Day. Sins at Home.

1. The Dramatic Situation. Amos now focuses his invective upon the people whom he knows to the very heart. In the measure that their civilization is the more highly developed, the greater is their responsibility and the more exacting the standard which he applies. Try to imagine the effect of his sudden transition upon his hearers, as they now hear themselves not only ranked with those whose condemnation they had commended but as they are execrated for sins which were even more heinous.

2. The Charges. What sin is attacked in Amos 2:6? Justice had been perverted and men of authority had sold their decisions for bribes. Again and again prophets have attacked this sin, not in ancient Israel only but in this present age and land. It is the eternal protest of the man of conscience against the unjust "pull" of money and influence. The first clause of verse 7 probably read originally, "Trample on the head of the poor." Has it present-day significance? As a citizen of means or influence, what is your attitude toward those humble servants of Jehovah who are not financially able to protect themselves? Are your sympathies with your own class or with those who most need your help?

3. Hypocrisy. Read verse 7, last clause. Characterize this charge. This sin had become common and flagrant. It was connected with the temple. Read verse 8. The garments of the poor, taken for non-payment of debt, should have been returned to their owners at night. Cf. the ancient law in Ex. 22:26, 27. The outer garment was the only bed the poor possessed. "Every altar,"—note the universality of the sin. Nothing is more loathsome in the sight of man or God than immorality under the hypocritical guise of religion. Read Ps. 51:6, 7.

4. Israel's Ingratitude. Who is Jehovah who demands of you, "Why do you not obey me? The Amorites were a mighty nation, but I Jehovah, destroyed them root and branch." Read Amos 2:9. "I brought you up out of Egypt and gave you political and material prosperity." Read Amos 2:10. "I provided for your spiritual needs, gave you prophets to preach and Nazirites, holy men, to live pure lives as object lessons before you." Read Amos 2:11. Cf. Num. 6:1-21. "You have not only refused to listen, but you have perverted their holy living." Read Amos 2:12. Note the contrasts: the indifference of men (verse 6), and the tenderness of God (verse 10); the suffocating lust of the temple (verses 7, 8), and the healthful open air of the woods (verse 9); the refined but sinful civilization of the people, and the simplicity and devotion of the Nazirites.

II. AMOS: HIS ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Seventh Day. Review of the Week.

1. Jehovah's Condemnation. Read Amos 2:13-16. Verse 13, "I will squeeze you, as the sheaves squeeze an overloaded cart." Verses 14-16 are the metaphors of war. The end of Israel shall be unseemly flight. Not even the swift nor the mighty nor the skilful shall be able to resist, but, stripped of everything for flight, shall flee the city. "National annihilation awaits you at the hand of Jehovah; and you, O Israel, have brought it on yourselves."

2. Where did Amos get his message? His book contains facts and moral principles. He gained his facts from history and from the close study of the conditions of his day; his convictions came to him as his eyes were thus opened to receive God's revelation; his message is an accurate and fearless combination of facts and convictions. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The man who has had his eyes opened to the needs of his age, and to perceive God's eternal truth, always has a message of supreme importance. For only through such a man can God reveal to humanity His loving character and purpose.

3. Formulate the two or three great truths which underlie Amos 1:2—2:16. What two popular conceptions of his day did Amos defy? If you are not able to state them, read Amos 3:1, 2; 5:21-27.

4. Memorize Ps. 51:16-17.

"For Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

5. "He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found or earth's failure;
'Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered, 'Yes,—
Hence with life's pale lure!'
That low man sees a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it;
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit;
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him."

BROWNING, *Grammarian's Funeral.*

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CORNILL, *Prophets of Israel,* pp. 37-46. SANDERS and KENT, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 23-33. G. A. SMITH, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Part I, Chap. 5, Sections 1, 2 of Chap. 6, Chap. 7.

STUDY III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

First Day. Amos' Credentials.

1. Amos has brought a capital charge against Israel. Now he summons her before the bar of justice and, as Jehovah's spokesman, announces the final judgment. He is not content merely to include Israel in the general verdict against her neighbors. Why does he give her a separate trial? Study III. is a record of the case.

2. Read Amos 3:1. With this solemn formula, Amos summons Israel before the bar of justice. Jehovah has preferred the charges and has appointed Amos his attorney on earth. Amos' argument proceeds slowly on the basis of responsibility. Read and memorize verse 2. This verse is the keynote of the prophecy.

3. Reflect on your own environment. In what sense are you responsible if you have been specially blessed by the refinements of home, society and college associations? Recall Jesus' parable of the talents. You stand before God, as well as men, for just what you have received. The vital question is not what you have; but how you have improved what has been given you.

4. Recall from Study II. that Amos is standing before a people of wealth, culture, and religious zeal, in a time of peace and prosperity. They were antagonistic to this humble Judean prophet. It took courage to utter the doom of Israel; and it is little wonder that the people strike back with the question, "Who are you, and with what authority do you speak?" Note Amos' strange answer in 3:3-8. These illustrations are taken from the shepherd life with which Amos was so familiar. Two men would hardly meet in the abandoned desert of Tekoa without previous appointment. Examine each of these desert metaphors and determine what common truth they illustrate. Amos is arguing here from effects back to cause. The Hebrews, like other ancient peoples, connected calamities with the displeasure of the Deity. They took no account of secondary causes.

5. Read again verses 7-8. Note the tone of certainty in verse 6. "Shall evil befall a city and Jehovah not have done it?" Certainly not. You ask who I am, I will tell you: I am a man of God, to whom Jehovah hath spoken: therefore I cannot be silent."

6. A man who sees facts not through other men's eyes but as God sees them, and therefore as they really are, the man who responds courageously to the divine call and declares by word and act his convictions, is the most dynamically potent factor in human society. It matters not whether he comes from a shepherd's hut or a palace. He is God's man, and therefore resistless. Individual and corporate injustice, hypocrisy and immorality cannot stand before him.

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Second Day. The Test of a Nation's Stability.

1. "Not only is Israel's responsibility greater than that of other peoples. Her crimes themselves are more heinous." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.* The heathen, even the nobles of Ashdod and Egypt, are invited to judge the moral condition of Samaria. Read Amos 3:9-10. What particular sins are mentioned? (Verse 10). "Violence and robbery"—the nobles store up wealth secured by oppression of the poor.

2. In the presence of these heathen witnesses, Amos condemns Israel in the name of Jehovah. Complete destruction is impending. Read Amos 3:11-12. Note the desert figure in verse 12. This comparison with the shepherd shows both the scant numbers and the shattered condition of the survivors after Jehovah's judgment has been executed. Amos' supreme contempt for idleness and luxury is shown in verse 12b.

3. Read Amos 3:13-15. Bethel (verse 14), about ten miles north of Jerusalem, was Israel's chief sanctuary. Under the patronage of the king (Amos 7:13), it was the most popular sanctuary of the northern kingdom, and was crowded with worshippers (Amos 9:1). For its destruction by the army of Josiah read II Kings 23:15. The "horns of the altar," symbols of strength, conferred safety on those who took hold of them.

4. Read Amos 4:1-3. "It is a cowherd's rough picture of women; a troop of kine—heavy, heedless animals, trampling in their anxiety for food upon every frail and lowly object in the way." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.* Why is the prophet's condemnation of the women so severe? Read again the last half of Amos 4:1. Think of calling the society women of Israel the "cows of Bashan!" Bashan was a fertile region east of the Jordan. Note the picture of their headlong flight.

5. "The prophets insist that it is a moral question upon which the fate of a civilization is decided. Is justice observed in essence as well as form? Is there freedom or is the prophet silenced? Does luxury or self-denial prevail? Do the rich make life hard for the poor? Is childhood sheltered and innocence respected? By these, claim the prophets, a nation stands or falls; and history has proven the claim on wider worlds than they dreamt of." Regardless of civilization "nothing is too costly for God's justice." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Third Day. "Yet have ye not returned unto Me."

1. Amos now attacks Israel's religion. That religion was a worship of Jehovah, but was expressed in mere ceremonialism. "Your zeal is false," he seems to say, "and your religion a delusion." Read Amos 4:4-5. Amos summons the people to their worship. Note the sarcasm in his invitation. Bethel, see Second Day, 3. Gilgal was a representative sanctuary. "Bring your tithes every morning"—they were usually brought once a year. "Publish abroad your free will offerings," *i. e.*, those offerings which you make spontaneously. Read Matt. 6:2.

2. Unheeded Chastisements. Amos 4:6-11. (a) Famine. Read verse 6 carefully. Note the contrast between "I," the living God, and the faithless, dying people. There is a pathos in the repeated refrain, "yet have ye not returned unto Me." Jehovah could have saved Israel, but she would not come unto Him. What is it to "come to God" in the sense which Amos intended? Observe how he later interprets his meaning. (b) Read verses 7-8. Drought. "Three months before harvest," if rain did not come, the crop would perish before it could ripen. Verse 8. Cities in the East are dependent for water on underground cisterns. Amos pictures a city, its water supply exhausted, staggering, faint from thirst, to a neighboring city for water. (c) Blasting and Mildew. Read vs. 9. This was caused by the east wind or sirocco. (d) Read vs. 10. Pestilence and Sword. Read Ps. 91:3-6. "The boil of Egypt" is a common expression. See Ex. 9:8-10. (e) Read vs. 11. Earthquake. This is the most mysterious of the manifestations of the Deity's wrath.

3. Five times Amos has issued his call to repentance, and Israel makes no answer. Read vss. 12-13. Does he name the calamity? What attributes does he ascribe to Jehovah?

4. This section, like Amos 2:6-12, is a study in contrast; between "men's treatment of God and God's treatment of men. They lavish on him gifts and sacrifices. He sends upon them calamities. They regard Him as a being only to be flattered and fed. He regards them as creatures with characters to discipline. Their views of Him, if religious, are sensuous and gross; His views of them, if austere, are moral and ennobling." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

5. In what does your religion consist? Are you content with merely attending religious services? Are you in personal touch with our Heavenly Father? Is Christ's spirit dominant in your life? Have you tasted the joy of personally helping men in distress and ignorance and sin?

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Fourth Day. The Possibility of Jehovah's Mercy.

1. Thus far, Amos has appeared as a prophet of divine wrath. He has proclaimed the inevitable destruction awaiting Israel, for she has repeatedly and defiantly sinned against Jehovah and there is no escape from punishment. But in this section the tone changes from vengeance (cf. Amos 4:12-13) to one of yearning love.

2. It opens with an elegy over the death of Israel. Read Amos 5:1-3. Note the pathos and beauty in vs. 2:

> "Fallen never again to rise,
> Is the virgin Israel
> Prostrate upon her soil she lies;
> There is none to raise her."

The nation is personified as a beautiful maiden, wounded and helpless in the mire, with no strong, loving friend to help. Note the numerical estimate of the disaster in vs. 3.

3. Read Amos 5:4-9. Jehovah pleads with Israel. Although she has not returned unto Him, still He entreats her once more. It is the voice of the loving Father that we hear. "Seek Me," come back, learn My will, do what is good, perform the things that are pleasing to Me. Be once more My child. What is the warning in vs. 5? The names of the famous sanctuaries are made to suggest the impending doom. With vs. 6b the prophet seems overcome once more by Jehovah's power and majesty. He again describes the dangers of resistance to this entreaty. To His invitation, Israel has made no answer. Read again vs. 7. Jehovah demands righteousness. Determine from this verse what His people give Him. Note in vss. 8-9 the attributes of Jehovah's power. What is the logical connection of these majestic verses with the preceding?

4. Amos again takes up the theme of vs. 7. Read vs. 10. "The gate,"—there justice was administered. Read vs. 11. The oppressors of the poor shall themselves be oppressed. Read vs. 12. The "bribe" was ransom money paid for the release of a criminal condemned to death. This was contrary to Israelitish law. Num. 35:31. Read vs. 13. What forms of bribery are still practised in our modern commercial and political life? Why are they so fatally pernicious? Is bribery of a public official essentially treason?

5. Read vss. 14, 15. This is Jehovah's final appeal. He does not demand ceremonials, but life and deeds. Memorize vs. 14. In vs. 15b appears that first idea of a remnant, a faithful few who will be saved, which was the hope of later prophets. Cf. Is. 11:11.

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Fifth Day. The Impending National Disaster.

1. In response to Jehovah's second entreaty, Israel makes no answer. Amos immediately sounds her death knell with 5:16; 6:14. Read 5:16-17. The "skilful in lamentation" were hired mourners who assisted at funerals. Note the universality of the lamentation.

2. Read vss. 18-20. Jehovah's Day meant to the Israelite the day of His triumph over His enemies, and of His judgment of the heathen. To Amos, conscious of Israel's guilt, it is a day of "insidious, importunate, inevitable death."

3. What in Israel's worship did Jehovah so thoroughly despise, and why? Read vss. 21-24. Note the majestic swing of these verses. What does Amos declare to be the essence of true worship? As a result of your life and thought, does righteousness go forth as an ever-flowing stream?

4. Read vss. 25-27. Amos appeals to the days of simplicity when Jehovah seemed especially close to His people; the days when they put their trust in Him. They offered Him no feasts or offerings then. Propitiatory bribes shall not avail to save you from captivity.

5. Does the "Day of Jehovah" mean a single day or a gradual development? From your knowledge of history, can you not trace a progress in God's dealings with His people, from His earliest revelations to that supreme revelation in Christ? What was Jesus' teaching concerning His Kingdom and Himself as its Head? Mark 4:28. He refused to follow that popular Jewish conception of a Messiah of political or temporal power. The Kingdom which he proclaimed was in the hearts of men. Did he teach that this was a growth?

6. You have a part in the "Day of Jehovah." You are responsible in the society in which you live for faithfulness to your trust. Whether you have the spirit of Christ or not, as a citizen of a Christian nation you have a share in the world's work. If you are untrue to your trust, the work assigned to you will never be done. You have the ability, as no one else has, to complete fully the task assigned to you in your special environment.

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Sixth Day. False Political Confidence.

1. Amos passes from the false idea of worship to Israel's unwarranted confidence in her own security. He introduces us to a scene of blasé contentment. The political leaders of the leading nation of the world have become irresponsible voluptuaries. They have forgotten kindness, sympathy and love.

2. Carefully read Amos 6:1-6. Determine the guilt of the "notable men." Vs. 1. "At ease,"—recklessly at ease with no thought of impending danger. "Notable men" are the back-bone of the nation; to them the people go to have justice administered. Vs. 2. Though this verse is differently explained, its probable meaning is this: Can you find, from Calneh in Babylonia and Hamath in North Syria, to Gath of the Philistines on the South, a single kingdom more flourishing than your own? Thus has Jehovah blessed you, and how do you requite Him? "The evil day," Vs. 3. They feel secure against the coming disaster, yet prepare in their midst a place where violence may be enthroned. Vs. 4, *i. e.,* lie on beds of luxury and eat the choicest meats. Vs. 5, "prattle idle songs." David enjoyed a national reputation as a musician. Read I Sam. 16:18. Vs. 6. Note the gluttony expressed by "bowls." But the climax of their crime is that they do not care for the poverty and misery and wrongs of the poor.

3. The sins mentioned are the sins of selfishness. Self-indulgence carried to such extremes always leads to social indifference. Instead of helping to lift the load of humanity's ills, they have added the burden of their own indifference. What is your attitude toward questions of social reform? Are you like that "prudent man who keeps silence in such a time" (5:13) for fear of criticism and unpleasant publicity, or do you dare stand? As a member of a college community, what is your attitude toward existing evils; those so often overlooked yet none the less sinful? Do you smile at gambling and drunkenness and impurity and deceit? Or do you dare stand for the noblest principles of college honor?

III. AMOS' ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL.

Seventh Day. The Death Sentence.

1. Before the bar of justice, in the presence of Jehovah, Israel stands condemned. The voice of Almighty God entreating her, has awakened no response. Unrepentant, she awaits her sentence, and it is destruction.

2. Read Amos 6:7. How fitting that the nobles who have led the nation should walk at the head of the procession of captives. Note the irony. Read vs. 8. Jehovah solemnly swears that he hates Israel. "Excellency of Jacob,"—the boasted pride of her wealth and power.

3. Read vss. 9, 10. "The death of even so large a household as ten—the funeral left to a distant relation—the disposal of the bodies by burning instead of by the burial customary among the Hebrews—sufficiently reflect the kind of calamity. Note the impression of ghastly realism; the unclean and haunted house; the kinsman and the body-burner afraid to search through the infected rooms, and calling in muffled voice to the single survivor crouching in some far corner of them, 'Are there any more with thee?' his reply 'None'—himself the next! Yet these details are not the most weird. Over all hangs a terror darker than the pestilence. 'Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?' " G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

4. Read vs. 11. Even the poor and innocent must suffer. Note the folly of the comparison in vs. 12. "Would you plow the sea? Yet your madness in resisting Jehovah is more astounding."

5. Read vss. 13, 14. The agent of Israel's destruction is Assyria. Cf. Study II., Second Day, 2. The territory mentioned in vs. 14b had been recently recovered for Israel by Jeroboam II. Cf. II Kings 14:25.

6. Make a concise statement of Israel's sins. Forget for the moment that you have been studying a period lying nearly twenty-seven hundred years in the past, and note the surprising modernity of Israel's social problems.

7. Remember that a nation is made up of individuals. A nation is no stronger than the states which compose it. A state is no stronger than the counties into which it is divided. The village or city where you live is safe only as the homes which comprise it are pure and secure. Your home is largely dependent on you, a member of it. The test as to whether or not a nation walks with God is whether or not its individual citizens walk with God. Israel forgot to walk with God and she perished. It is fatal for any nation or individual thus to forget.

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STUDY IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

First Day. The Higher Type of Prophetic Visions.

1. Thus far in his arraignment of Israel, Amos has uttered his denunciations in the name of Jehovah without indicating in detail the manner in which he received his message and his impulse to serve. With the seventh chapter, however, we find a series of visions, variously interpreted, which suggests how this message came to him.

2. Read Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1. These verses immediately raise the following questions: What were Amos' visions? Was there anything in the preceding experiences of the nation to suggest them? Cf. vss. 4:9, 7. Were they like the crude, ecstatic visions that occurred in early primitive prophecy? Were they real objective experiences, or were they mental experiences?

3. The visions of Amos certainly were not of the frenzied sort such as the false prophets beheld. Read Amos 7:14 and note how he disclaims all connection with the prophetic societies.

4. Amos and the later prophets regarded their visions as objective in the sense that they were caused by God. Amos 7:1. Amos is conscious of having received a revelation. So were the other great prophets. Sometimes they heard the message; sometimes they saw it; but they were always conscious that it came from God. Cf. Is. 6:1; Jer. 1:11.

5. May not these visions have been the prophets' spiritual interpretations of existing facts and conditions, visible alike to themselves and their contemporaries, but meaningless except to the prophet with inspired insight? This type of vision is familiar to psychologists. It is familiar also to believers in prayer. It is the God-given power to see things as they really are and to interpret their true significance. The earliest prophets interceded with God. Cf. Amos 7:2. They prayed to Him and were conscious of receiving a definite answer. It is a fact of universal experience that when a person is in close and natural communion with God, he will surely, sooner or later, gain a clear conception of truth and duty. The prophet's mind, in searching for truth, was in a state of intense activity, and upon this active, intelligent mind the Divine mind made its impression.

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Second Day. The Interpretation and Application of Amos' Visions.

1. In the books of the Hebrew prophets we commonly find that the call of the prophet to his task is not recorded until the latter part of his ministry. This is true of Amos and Isaiah. It is probable that the visions of Amos recorded in chapters 7-9 were experiences which came to him in his early ministry, but they do not appear to have been employed by him until all other methods had failed.

2. His sermons of invective and warning failed to change the hearts of the people. Hence he used those visions to impress upon his hearers the fundamental truth that Jehovah, though He be long-suffering, cannot leave the wicked and unrepentant nation unpunished. Cf. 1:3, 6, 9, 11. These visions are really a series of illustrated sermons. One central thought runs through them all. Determine the nature of this thought as you take up the visions in order.

3. The vision of the locusts. Read Amos 7:1. When do the locusts appear? The "king's mowings" were probably tributes levied by the kings on the spring herbage. The second crop supported the people. What does the prophet do and with what success. Read Amos 7:2, 3. Probably such a locust plague had occurred before. Cf. Amos 5:9. What was there in the social and moral condition of Israel to explain the prophet's alarm?

4. The vision of the Great Drought. Read Amos 7:4. "The great deep" was the subterranean waters on which the earth was supposed to rest; it was also the source of springs and fountains. Cf. Gen. 7:11. The figure is intended to describe the universality and completeness of the drought. Read Amos 7:5, 6. Both these disasters are in the realm of nature. What is Amos' attitude toward them? Does he summon them as punishment upon guilty Israel, or are they to be regarded as the inevitable consequences of its sin? What is the basis of Amos' appeal for Israel? Is it Jehovah's justice or His mercy?

5. A new aspect of Amos' character appears here. He suffers with the people whose sins he denounces. The judgment which he must proclaim fills his own soul with agony. He is not a mere voice that announces destruction; he is a man whose heart bleeds for his people, but who is powerless to save them. Hence his appeals for pity. "Forth to his mission of judgment he must go, but he goes to it from the mercy seat, and the ministry of intercession."

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Third Day. Inevitable Judgment About to Overtake Israel.

1. The vision of the plumb-line. The two preceding visions were drawn from nature. This vision is drawn from city life. Read Amos 7:7-9. How is Jehovah pictured? By what standard will the nation be judged? Jehovah tests the nation by the plumb-line. What is the result of the test? What has been the trouble with Israel's sanctuaries? Read again 5:21-24. What is the verdict of Jehovah? Why is Amos here unable to intercede for Israel? By comparison with the true standards of justice, Jehovah made known to Amos the dangerous condition of Israel's national life.

2. Amos has pronounced the doom of the sanctuaries. They were regarded as the dwelling place of Jehovah. Naturally, Amaziah, the priest of the sanctuary of Bethel, charges Amos with treason against the nation and against Jehovah, the nation's God. Read his charge against Amos in 7:10-13. To whom does Amaziah make the charge? Had Amos conspired against Israel? How far is the charge true? Whom did Amos represent in his attack upon the nation? "It is a familiar scene in history where priest and man face each other—the priest with a king behind him, the man with God behind him. Amaziah's speech is contemptuous, revealing only fear, pride and privilege." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.* What does Amaziah tell Amos to do? Cf. 5:12. "Eat bread" implied that Amos prophesied for mercenary motives. Notice the utter lack of spiritual consciousness in the final word of the priest in vs. 13.

3. Amos' Reply. To the charge that he is a false and mercenary prophet Amos makes the retort recorded in 7:14-17. What was Amos' daily occupation? Who called Amos to his task? The fearless man of God answers the challenge and then scathingly condemns the priest who has set his office and system against God. What terrible calamities are described in vss. 16, 17? Amos repeats the very word which Amaziah has used in his charge against him.

4. Vision of Summer Fruit. Read Amos 8:1-3. Tropical summer fruit is luscious, outwardly attractive, but often inwardly rotten. What is the conception here of the final and loathsome end of the nation? What germs of decay were within it?

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Fourth Day. Sin Causes Spiritual Famine.

1. The hypocritical worship so bitterly denounced by Amos is the direct result of the low morals of the nation and the disregard of God's poor by the rich. In Amos 8:4-10 we have the denunciation of the merchants of Israel for their greed and dishonesty. What have the wealthy forgotten to do? What is the nature of their crimes as described in vss. 5, 6? The "new moon" was observed as a holy day, a day on which trade was suspended. "Ephah" was the measure used in selling; "shekel" represented the money weighed out and paid by the purchaser. The rich by their fraud forced the poor into debt.

2. What punishments does Jehovah swear to send upon Israel in 8:8-10? An earthquake is probably described in vs. 8. It symbolizes the complete ruin of the land.

3. Read vss. 11-14. This is the most terrible threat that Amos has pronounced. A famine is here described. What kind of a famine is it? The nation is thought of as tottering like a sick man for lack of food. The food they seek is indeed a revelation from Jehovah. But the prophet in that day will be gone. They will be utterly cast off by God. Vss. 13, 14. The flower of the nation shall be destroyed. The young men and maidens shall fall down exhausted. Those who swear by the half-heathen sanctuaries shall perish.

4. Try to imagine all the influences of religion taken out of your life. In trouble, sickness, loneliness, failure, try to imagine yourself cut off from God. This is what Amos prophesies as a natural and inevitable consequence of the nation's persistent sin. Sin, whether national or individual, isolates a man from God. If a man shuts his eyes to purity and honesty and sympathy and love, and allows selfish ambition and unholy lust to ravage his soul, he, by his own deliberate act, shuts God out of his life. And he not only shuts out God, he shuts out also the things for which God forever stands. He loses the ability to be pure, to be honest, to be kind, the ability for friendship and love. Can anything in this world be more awful than spiritual famine, spiritual starvation, self-inflicted?

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Fifth Day. Vision of the Smitten Sanctuary and the End of the Nation.

1. In this last oracle the prophet dwells upon the might and majesty of Jehovah, and then pronounces the final and unescapable decision. Israel will not listen; she will not obey; Jehovah can do nothing but inflict the penalty she deserves.

2. Read Amos 9:1. As Amos turns to leave the sanctuary he beholds beside the altar the Lord pronouncing the last fearful denunciation. The people shall meet their death in the temple which they have profaned. What truth does the prophet emphasize in 9:2-4? "Carmel" was thickly wooded and filled with caves having narrow, winding entrances. The "serpent" was a legendary sea monster which figures prominently in the oldest Semitic traditions.

3. Then follow two beautiful verses, descriptive of Jehovah's power. Read vss. 5-7. What attributes are ascribed here to Jehovah? "These verses are the natural leap of the soul to the stars. They are the passages most fondly dwelt upon by the poetry of the desert." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

Read vs. 7 and compare it with the verse previously studied (3:2). Why has Jehovah dealt so bitterly with this people? Amos' concluding words are portion of vs. 8—"Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth."

4. In the remainder of Chap. 9 (vss. 8c-15) are found many expressions and ideas which seem to be foreign to Amos. In vs. 9 Israel is represented as being scattered among the nations. Throughout the rest of the prophecy, however, Amos declares that Israel will be captive to Assyria. He then also predicts the destruction of the entire nation; here (vs. 8c) a portion of the nation is spared. It has often been observed that a material restoration and prosperity of Judah, and this without any previous moral reformation, is not only inconsistent with the ethics of Amos, but also with the conception of God which he presents. Some scholars, to explain this change in the author's point of view, regard this closing section of Amos as an appendix which was added by some scribe after the exile in order to adapt the book of Amos to the very different needs of the later Jewish community. Do you think that such a view adds to or detracts from the total impression which the book of Amos makes upon you?

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Sixth Day. Amos' Conception of God.

1. Amos was a fearless prophet of destruction. Throughout the pages of his prophecy we can hear Israel's death knell tolling. Why was Israel in such extreme danger? From earliest times there prevailed the idea that Israel and Jehovah were one. It was a strange teaching which asserted that Jehovah would turn against His people. Was it not a unique position for a prophet to take? There were three grounds for this announcement of doom: (a) blind self-confidence in the face of grave political dangers from without; (b) religious hypocrisy and exclusiveness; (c) disregard by the rulers of their own obligations and of the people's rights.

2. The moral and spiritual teachings of Amos—those, indeed, of any Old Testament writer—cannot be studied apart from the idea of God then prevailing. Morals, individual and national, have their ultimate basis in God; hence the force of what men conceive His nature and will to be. What, then, was Amos' conception of God?

(a) How does Amos designate God, and what is the meaning of the title? Amos 5:14, 27; 6:8, 14.

(b) Is He a God who reveals Himself through Nature? 4:7-11; 8:8; 9:5.

(c) Is He interested in men? 3:1, 2, 7.

(d) Is He the God of the world, or only of Israel? 1:5; 2:1-3; 9:2, 3; 9:7.

(e) Is He a God of mercy? 7:2, 3, 5, 6. Is He a God of justice; and what is the relation between justice and mercy? Cf. 1:3, 6; 7:8, 9.

(f) What is God's attitude toward sacrifice and the mere forms of worship? 3:14; 5:21-25; 9:1.

(g) What sort of worship does God require? 2:6-8; 5:24.

IV. AMOS' VISIONS AND TEACHINGS.

Seventh Day. Social and Moral Teachings of Amos.

1. Was Amos a socialist? Recall his origin and the class he represented; recall his attitude toward the rich, the rulers, the corrupt judges; recall, further, the charge that the royal official, Amaziah, made against him.

2. Did Amos look for an overthrow of existing social and political conditions? If so, did he regard such an overthrow as a calamity, or as a necessity to be welcomed? Did he make any effort to avert it? Did he look for the salvation of society by means of a fundamental reorganization of it, or by means of a deeper recognition of individual responsibility?

3. Amos does not attack wealth; he denounces the selfish misuse of it. He is not the champion of the poor simply because they are poor; he espouses their cause because they are oppressed. He does not decry the idea of rulership; he condemns the abuse of its sacred trusts. Amos has much in common with all socialists. But his is a socialism that spells neither upheaval nor anarchistic rejection of all political organization, nor the abandonment of the heritage of the past; it is a socialism in which all men and all nations shall recognize their part in the plan of God, a socialism in which each man shall realize the necessity of being faithful to his own individual responsibility. The national disaster which Amos depicts is not merely a means to an end, nor even a remedy for evil; it is an inevitable consequence of Israel's failure to accept and act upon the real principles of life.

"No tendency in modern life is more destructive to social progress than the tendency to weaken the sense of personal responsibility for social imperfection; and to fix the blame on unpropitious circumstances. The obvious fact is, that for a very large part of social disorder, the chief responsibility lies in the passions and ambitions of individual men, and that no social arrangement can guarantee social welfare, unless there is brought home to vast numbers of individuals a profounder sense of personal sin." F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question.*

REFERENCES.

Sanders and Kent, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 40-44. Kent, *History of the Hebrew People,* Vol. II, pp. 92-97. G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Part I, Chap. 6, Sections 3, 10, 11.

STUDY V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

First Day. The Need of the Hour.

1. Amos has finished his message. He has thundered forth the eternal principles of truth and righteousness. As God's spokesman he has summoned men to a new sense of responsibility, to a stricter devotion to their God; and, with a terrible arraignment of Israel's sins—sins that were sweeping her on to inevitable destruction—his ministry closed. There was little tenderness in his message; it was cold and severe. There was little hope in his ministry; it was full of despair. Hard, punitive justice intensified the gloom. His work was not final. It could not be.

2. Amos was the conscience of the state. He convicted men of sin. There was needed now a prophet of repentance. The time called for a man who embodied in himself, and could winsomely utter to others, the great message that still remained unspoken; a man with a heart so pure and tender that he could allure men to God, and inspire them to know, that greater than justice, grander than law, the deepest thing in human life, and the highest thing in God, is love.

3. Read Hos. 7:15; 11:1, 3, 4. "How fitting that Hosea—whose very name means salvation—should have been chosen to deliver this message! His was a life of sympathy with God and with men. He came not as a prophet above his fellows. He suffered with them and bore their sorrows. He did not alone try to frighten men into the life of righteousness; he sought to draw them by proclaiming the love of God. He was the 'first prophet of peace, Israel's earliest evangelist.' ". G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Vol. 1, Chap. 13.

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Second Day. The Man Hosea.

1. Read Hos. 1:1. From this superscription, and the internal evidence of the book, the date of Hosea's prophetic activity is placed between 745 and 720 B. C. He probably began to preach within less than five years after Amos finished his Bethel sermons.

2. Did Hosea live in Israel or in Judah? Read 1:4; 5:1; 7:1. Hosea constantly refers to the Kingdom of Israel, and shows an intimate connection with its history and politics. He alludes rarely to the Kingdom of Judah, to Jerusalem never. These facts indicate that he was a native and a citizen of Israel. Unlike Amos, he rises as a prophet out of the midst of his own people.

3. This may explain his intimate familiarity with the conditions of his day. With the certainty of a skilful physician he diagnoses the disease of his nation. What charge does he bring against the rulers (7:3, 5); against the ritual and the sanctuaries (13:2); against short-sighted politicians (7:11)? What ugly sins besmirch the character of Israel (4:2)? What is the underlying cause of this immorality of priest, king and people (4:1)?

4. In the foregoing renunciation of the evils of his time, Hosea is not unlike Amos; but this is a surface agreement only; his is a far richer and deeper life than that of his predecessor. Like Elisha, he is in the best sense a man among men. He was more than a strident voice from the desert. Before our eyes he lives and sympathizes and suffers and loves. There is not a prince, or judge, or priest in Israel whose sin he fears to denounce; and, on the other hand, there is not a man so poor, nor widow or orphan so desolate, nor a life so blasted by sin, that Hosea's message of love cannot comfort and relieve. Read 10:11; 11:4; 11:10; 14:5, 6, and notice how much he cares for nature, for the simple things of everyday life, and for mankind.

"Hosea's love steals across his whole land like the dew, pervading every separate scent and color, till all Galilee lies before us, lustrous and fragrant as nowhere else outside the parables of Jesus. . . . The poetry of Hosea clings about his native soil like its trailing vines. . . . His love was as the love of that greater Galilean: however high, however lonely it soared, it was yet rooted in the common life below, and fed with the unfailing grace of a thousand homely sources." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Vol. 1, Chap. 14.

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Third Day. The Domestic Experiences of the Prophet.

1. The first three chapters of Hosea reveal the hidden depths of the prophet's life. They tell a story of ruined hopes and crucified ambitions, of love that never reached its consummation, of purity blasted in the bud, of a home life devastated by shame. It is the story of conjugal infidelity, but this infidelity is not mocked at or despaired of as in so much of our modern drama and story. Let us see how Hosea deals with his heart-breaking problem.

2. Read Hos. 1:2, 3. What does the Lord impel Hosea to do? Read 1:3-5. What name does Jehovah command Hosea to give to his first son? Jezreel was the name of a plain that had been stained by the blood of a king. Cf. II Kings 9:24. Would not the name of the child be a constant reminder of the calamity to befall Israel for her sins? Read 1:6, 7. The name of the daughter means "unpitied." What explanation is given in vs. 6 for this name? Read 1:8, 9. The name of the last boy is, "Not my people." It is meant to suggest the repudiation of the covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel. Instead of pleasant names, Hosea has given to his children prophetic names, reminders of the unpalatable message he must preach to his nation.

3. Is it reasonable to suppose that God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who was a harlot? Do you think that Hosea, if his wife had always been faithful to him, would have thus publicly disgraced her and his home for the sake of an allegorical illustration? Can you think of some simpler and more reasonable explanation of the beginning of Hosea's domestic tragedy?

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Fourth Day. The Domestic Experiences of the Prophet (continued).

1. The most reasonable explanation of Hosea's experiences is that they are real. The woman whom he marries is at first pure and faithful. At the birth of his children, however, Hosea finds that his wife has been untrue to her marriage relations, has polluted herself and flouted his love by intrigues with various paramours. She now leaves Hosea's home and becomes the concubine of another.

2. Hosea's wife has forgotten him; she has dishonored his name; she has abandoned his home to live the life of a harlot. But Hosea cannot forget her. He remembers her as he loved her in the days of her purity and wifely devotion. And he knows that he loves her still. In the midst of this heartbreaking trial he hears the voice of Jehovah speaking. Read Hos. 3:1. What does the Lord tell Hosea to do? What reason is given? What price does he pay for her? 3:2. This was the price of a common slave; it was equivalent to about eighteen dollars. What relation will she now bear to Hosea? 3:3. Why cannot she become his wife once more and enjoy his love?

> "Weeping blinding tears,
> I took her to myself, and paid the price
> (Strange contrast to the dowry of her youth
> When first I wooed her); and she came again
> To dwell beneath my roof. Yet not for me
> The tender hopes of those departed years,
> And not for her the freedom and the love
> I then bestowed so freely. Sterner rule
> Is needed now. In silence and alone
> In shame and sorrow, wailing, fast and prayer,
> She must blot out the stains that made her life
> One long pollution."
>
> PLUMPTRE, *Lazarus.*

3. The account of the unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife is a harrowing story. Now, as then, conjugal infidelity blights the common life. Is such perfidy on the man's part condemned as severely as it should be? The wife who is unfaithful to her husband is reprobated; but the husband who is untrue to his wife is not sufficiently made to feel the weight of public displeasure. A twofold moral standard, one for women and another for men, is too prevalent in our day. Is there any basis for this, either in one's conscience or in the teachings of Jesus? In the white light of Jesus' teaching there is no differentiation of purity in man and purity in woman; men and women are alike morally responsible; the purity that a man should desire in his wife, that, and no less, she has the right to demand of him.

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Fifth Day. Hosea's Call to Become a Prophet.

1. The divine summons to a great life-work does not always come in a voice of thunder nor in some mighty event. It lies back in the seemingly commonplace events that turned Godward the stream of our life; in temptations resisted that gave us new strength to resist; in sorrows that gripped but taught us tenderness of heart and sympathy for our fellows. So Hosea's call came.

2. Out of his own bitter experience Hosea heard the call of God to minister to a nation full of dishonor and shame. His own unhappy home had taught him his message. It consisted of five great personal truths: (1) That having loved his wife, he could never cease to love her, however much she had sinned. (2) That the sorrow her sin caused him was in direct proportion to his love for her. (3) That discipline was necessary in order to bring the heart of the guilty one to penitence. (4) That penitence must precede forgiveness and reconciliation. (5) That nothing is to be desired more than the joy of reconciliation.

> "To seek and save the lost,
> Forgetful of my calling and my fame,
> To call thee mine, and bring thee back to God,
> Became the master-passion of my heart."
>
> PLUMPTRE, *Lazarus*.

3. Hosea came to feel that the sorrow which had blighted his life was a common sorrow. His pain yielded to sympathy. His tragic experience led on to his heartfelt message, namely, that the love which he bore his wife, and the anguish her infidelity caused him, was like the love that God had for his nation, and the anguish that God felt when his nation ceased to care.

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Sixth Day. The Relationship Between Jehovah and Israel.

1. In the figure drawn from his own life, Hosea tells the story of Israel, and pleads with her to come back to Jehovah, her husband. The very names of his children suggest the estranged relations. Read Hos. 2:2-5. Israel is here pictured as the unfaithful wife. What does Hosea urge his fellow countrymen to do? Why is Israel no longer Jehovah's wife? With whom has she committed harlotry? Cf. 8:6. The figure of vs. 2 suggests the finery with which a harlot adorned herself. What motive led Israel to go astray (vs. 5)?

2. Since Israel has sinned, she must be disciplined. Read vss. 6-13. How will Jehovah win his bride back to himself? What mistake has Israel made as to Jehovah's attitude toward her (vs. 8)? What was the design of the punishments described in vss. 9-13?

3. But now the threats cease, and in their place we hear the tenderest promises. Read vss. 14-18. Here is a sudden change from righteous indignation to full forgiveness and reconciliation. These verses assume that punishment has accomplished its purpose, that penitence has taken the place of Israel's deliberate sinning. It anticipates a chapter in Israel's future which was not completed until after the exile had done its work. Where will Jehovah bring Israel? Vs. 14. What memories would the mention of the wilderness recall to an Israelite? Cf. vs. 15. The valley of Achor or "trouble" was the valley through which Israel entered the promised land. Cf. Josh. 7:24, 26. Note the tenderness of vs. 16. Jehovah's love is so great, His forgiveness is so far-reaching, that even the cattle (vs. 18) are included in the renewed covenant which He makes with Israel.

4. At last the proud heart of Israel breaks, and a glorious restoration is pictured. Read vss. 19-23. On what basis will Jehovah's new covenant with His people be established? Vss. 19, 20. Cf. vs. 13 and 4:1. How will Israel know that God has received her back to himself? Vss. 21-23. The names of the children shall be changed; Jezreel, with its sordid memories, but turned now to its truer meaning, "God sows," shall suggest the Divine bounty. "Unpitied" shall become pitied. "Not my people" shall become "My people." Once more Jehovah shall take back His bride to himself. "The wedding ring has been restored."

V. HOSEA: PROPHET OF LOVE.

Seventh Day. Israel's Immediate and Distant Future.

1. When the love of God was made clear, how strongly did Israel desire the day of restoration and reconciliation? God was ready; but Israel's attitude was proud and defiant. Read Hos. 3:4 and note the prophet's answer. They must first feel the discipline of broken political and religious organizations and painful exile.

2. But still the distant future contained a hope for the nation, which is concretely voiced in Hos. 3:5; 1:10-2:1.

3. Is God's love alone sufficient for reconciliation? Was Hosea's love for his wife sufficient to win her back to virtue? What else is essential to reconciliation?

4. Recall the story of Hosea's life. Recall the five vital truths of Hosea's message (Fifth Day) and determine how he applies them to Jehovah and Israel. What was the central theme of Hosea's teaching? Why was it necessary at this time? Is Hosea less manly than Amos? Is he nearer the spirit of Jesus' teachings?

5. The love which Hosea makes clear—the love of God for humankind and the love they should have for each other—is the greatest thing in the world. By its power men have been called to unselfish service; homes have been established; nations have been saved. It is the inspirer of all noble conduct; to attain it should be the goal of all effort. It is the fundamental element in religion; without it all else has little significance.

"Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth. . . . But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

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Sanders and Kent, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets*, pp. 47-57. Cornill, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 47-55. Kent, *History of the Hebrew People*, Vol. II, pp. 78-85. G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Part I, Chaps. 13, 14.

STUDY VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

First Day. The Spirit of the Times.

1. The third chapter closes the story of Hosea's home life. "He steps at once to his hard warfare for his people; and through the rest of the book we never hear him again speak of home, children, or of wife. It was a thick night into which he stepped from his shattered home. Here are stumbling and clashing; crowds in drift; confused rallies; gangs of assassins rushing across the highways; doors opening with lurid interiors full of drunken riot. Voices, which other voices mock, cry for a dawn which never comes." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Chap. 15.

2. Great changes have come to pass in the national life since the days of Amos' ministry. Then strong kings were on the thrones of Israel and Judah. Prosperity and peace reigned throughout their borders. Cf. Study II., First Day. Read Amos 6:1. But now Jeroboam is dead. Those who follow him on the throne are deposed by other ambitious office seekers, and these, in turn, are the victims of murderous court conspirators. The throne of Israel is bathed with blood. Security and peace have fled. Society, the permanence of which rests upon the wisdom of the sovereign, is fast crumbling to pieces in an age of uncertainty and corruption. Glance rapidly over II Kings 15 for a first hand impression of the unsettled condition of Israel.

3. The language of Hosea reflects the spirit of the age. Quickly changing scenes, bitter denunciations of unthinkable vice, the people frantically seeking help from heathen powers and finding none, outbreaks defiant of every law; all these symptoms betray the vitiated condition of the age.

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Second Day. Jehovah's Charges Against Israel.

1. In chapter four, Hosea, with all the power of his predecessor, Amos, hurls against sinning Israel Jehovah's accusation. Read vs. 1. What three fundamental elements in a nation's life are lacking in Israel? What particular crimes are rampant in Israel? Read vs. 2 and compare Hos. 10:4; 7:3; 6:8, 9; 4:14. Hosea feels that the case is hopeless. Read Hos. 4:3.

2. Are the people alone to blame? Read vss. 4, 5. The leaders of the people, priest and then the prophet, stumble first. They are false guides. To whose negligence does Hosea ascribe the lack of knowledge? Read vss. 6, 7, 8. Before God every priest is guilty of false leadership. But most unpardonable of all, the priests have taken delight in the people's sin. They have grown rich from the fines and the guilt-offerings. To-day the attitude of the priests would be labelled "ecclesiastical graft."

3. The priesthood had become synonymous with mere ritual. The bearers of the sacred office had forgotten their moral and intellectual responsibility. They had become "blind guides." The power of true religion lost, ritual fostered immoral practices. In these the people engaged. What punishment does Jehovah threaten? Read vss. 9, 10. What dire consequences follow in the wake of this lost knowledge? Read vss. 11, 12. The mention of trees and the tops of mountains (vs. 13) has reference to revelation in omens—flocks of birds and the like. The corruption of religion had led Israel back to the old superstitious practices of early days; and with these practices sensual appetite gets the upper hand.

4. Read vss. 14-19. In this charge is portrayed the shameful consequences of insidious error. At last the licentiousness of priests and common people is bringing its results. The daughters of Israel, young unmarried girls and newly married brides, are sacrificing their purity on the altars of shame. Note how unerringly Hosea placed the real responsibility in vs. 14. Immorality is a moral gangrene that preys upon the vitals of family life. And here in the very heart of Israel's life there is rottenness and corruption. As it was with Israel, so with any nation whose men corrupt themselves must the consequence inevitably be.

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Third Day. The Baneful Consequences of Criminal Leadership.

1. Read Hos. 5:1-7. Against whom is the charge directed? The shepherds of the people have encouraged lewd practices at the sanctuaries of Mizpah and Tabor. Both Israel and Judah are steeped in sin. Why can they not return to God? Vs. 4. The flocks and herds in vs. 6 were probably taken for the purpose of sacrifice; why did Jehovah reject the appeal of his people? Read vs. 7. What in the prophet's estimation would have won Jehovah's favor?

2. The alarm of war is sounding; the distant foe is approaching; the invader will sweep down upon Israel—

> "Blow the trumpet in Gibeah, the clarion in Ramah;
> Raise the alarm in Bethel: After thee, Benjamin."

What calamities are threatened against Israel? Read Hos. 5:8-14. To whom does Israel appeal for help? Vss. 11, 13. "King Jareb" is either a variation of the favorite Assyrian title "Great King," or else it is a nickname meaning "King Pick-a-Quarrel." Israel, situated on the great commercial highway between Assyria and Egypt, was a bone of contention for centuries. Does the prophet believe that Assyria will help Israel?

3. It is a pitiful picture that Hosea paints. The priests and princes have lost their spiritual and moral stamina. When public distress called for a leader, there was no leader about whom they could rally. The enemy was rapidly advancing; destruction was imminent; even Jehovah was obliged to turn in fierce judgment upon His people. It is a tragic picture of the Nemesis of sin.

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Fourth Day. Fickle Repentance.

"When he slew them, then they inquired after him
And they returned and sought God earnestly."

1. Perils of land, perils of sea, sickness and sorrow, famine and war usually make men think of God. When earthly help fails, even wicked men, as a last resort, turn to God. Read Hos. 6:1-3. Note the idle manner with which these Israelites take their formulas of repentance upon their lips. It is an insult to God to treat Him with such levity and fickle praise. Even God is perplexed to know what to do with such people. Their love, the necessary basis for real repentance, is like the mist of the morning or the early dew. Cf. vs. 4.

2. Jehovah has tried to impress upon the people His interest in them and the nature of His desire for them. What methods of instruction has He used? Read vs. 5. Instead of an answering love, what does Jehovah receive from these ungrateful people? Read 6:7-7:2. Note the footprints of the murderer, the defiling touch of adultery, the highway robbery carried on by a gang of priests under the name of religion. In 7:3-7 is vividly portrayed the corruption of the court life. The king is pictured surrounded by a sickening group of intoxicated cut-throats, and these only wait for the opportunity to murder their way to the throne. In all this seething mass of crime and despair, there is no one who lifts his face to God.

3. Out of the chapter comes a crystal verse: "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." There is the secret! How often Israel has used burnt offerings as a cloak for her sin; how often, to-day, men use almsgiving and Sunday-religion and church attendance and long prayers, in order to soothe their smitten conscience. The whole wretched make-believe becomes loathsome in the sunlight of the prophetic faith: "I desire goodness and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Fifth Day. Social and Political Decay.

1. Israel's leaders and people have been guilty of gross moral and spiritual crimes; they have come also to the verge of political disaster. Henceforth we get a picture of their social and political decay.

2. The strength of Israel in days gone by had been its separateness from outside powers. Seclusion had been her strength. But now Israel, her real strength gone, the knowledge of God overlaid with meaningless sacrifice and shameful lust, was sure to be sucked into the whirlpool of political intrigue and confusion. Read the first part of Hos. 7:8 and compare 8:8-10. "Ephraim —he lets himself be mixed among the nations."

3. But relations with foreign nations do not hold all the danger. The constitution of society at home is like an unbaked cake. "Ephraim has become a cake unturned." Of equality in worship and life, in profession and conduct, there is none.

4. Read 7:9-16. In their foreign relations, the people of Israel will be the losers. They seek disgraceful alliances, first with Egypt, and then with Assyria. They trust not in God, though He could deliver them. They repay His instruction with falsehood and lies. It is only when hunger grips them by the maw that they look up, and howl for food. What will be Egypt's attitude when they fall? Vs. 16. Cf. 8:7.

5. "Ephraim is a cake not turned." After all these ages of baking, society is with us an unturned cake. "How many Christians are living a life, one side of which is reeking with the smoke of sacrifice, while the other is never warmed by a religious thought—our worship overdone till it is cindry, dusty, unattractive, with the sap and freshness burnt out of it; while our conduct is cold, damp and heavy, like dough which the fire has never reached?" G. A. Smith.

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Sixth Day. "The Corruption that is through Lust."

1. Hosea has analyzed the condition of his nation. National unity is gone; anarchy is the rule. No leader has yet come to the front sufficiently strong to lead Israel in the path of moral sanity. She has no prestige among the nations of the earth; there is only false confidence, corruption, confusion, at home. Finally, in a picture of the future, Hosea portrays his nation undergoing the horrors of an impending exile. The people shall offer sacrifice like the heathen, but shall take no delight in it, Hos. 9:1-4; all sense of communion with God shall be then a mere memory of the past, 9:3; yea, Israel is even now reaping the consequences of her sin. What sort of message does the prophet utter in 9:7-9? Revolting lust is common. It must bring its own punishment.

2. Of the singular utterances of Hosea, the most strikingly characteristic are his transitions and contrasts. Mark the imagery of 9:10. Here Hosea pictures Israel in her early prime, pure and vigorous in the sight of God; then she comes into contact with the Canaanitish sanctuaries; shameful lusts have eaten their way into her very vitals; now there is "no more birth, no more motherhood, no more conception." Read 9:11-17. Already Hosea has shown Israel that prostitution impoverishes the mind and poisons the springs of the family life. Now he points out its ultimate deadliness. It destroys the power to produce. It kills a nation's vigor. It forebodes the suicide of the race. The story of undeveloped Eastern civilization, the story of the suffocating luxury of Rome, the story of the corrupt French courts of the Middle Ages, makes it as clear as daylight that unlicensed disregard for sexual purity spells disaster for any nation.

3. But Hosea does not allow the case to rest here. Unlike many dissectors of vice in our day, who display in drama and story the details of corrupt living, thinking, perhaps, that diagnosis should suggest a cure, unlike these, Hosea proclaims with great positiveness the one sovereign cure for sin and the moral consequences of sin; it is an unconditional surrender to the great and loving God; "I will be as the dew unto Israel. . . . I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

VI. A PEOPLE IN DECAY.

Seventh Day. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

1. Once more in this section of Hosea, the prophet attacks the hollowness of Israel's religious and political life. Read Hos. 10:1-3, and note how the material prosperity of Israel brought about false worship. Why is the prophet so bitterly opposed to these manifestations of Canaanitish worship? Have the people lost altogether their faith in God? What is the popular attitude toward the king? Can you trace any connection between loss of faith toward public men and loss of faith toward God? What will happen to the images that have been worshipped at Bethel? Read 10:5, 6. What mockery is this! The very gods they have worshipped shall be sent as tribute money to the king of Assyria; in the hour of peril their help does not avail. Even the king of Israel is tossed about like a chip on a roaring river. There is no stability or certainty anywhere. The rock of confidence is gone. Cf. vs. 8.

2. Men have become powerless, kings have failed, destruction is imminent; this is the harvest from seed deliberately sown. Read 10:13. "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity." Israel's whole history has been one of blind folly. There has been no moral or religious progress. False gods, crooked diplomats, puerile kings and pseudo-prophets cannot alter the harvest. The eternal laws of God's universe must work out their course. "O Israel, what shall I do unto thee?"

3. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life." Gal. 6:7, 8. How may a man sow unto his own flesh? How may he sow unto the spirit? What are some of the immediate fruits of spiritual sowing?

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Sanders and Kent, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 57-70. G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Part I, Chaps. 15, 16, 17.

STUDY VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

First Day. The Character of God.

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him
And from Egypt I called him to be my son."

1. Hosea cannot leave the fearful sentence of death which he has pronounced upon Israel without one final appeal. It is the cry of a father to his wayward child, pleading with him that the tender care shown in the days of childhood may yet be remembered; it is the anguish of parental love unrequited, of yearning solicitude never answered. In this final and most spiritual appeal of the whole book, Hosea reveals his idea of the character of God.

2. Read Hos. 11:1 and compare 2:15. Reflect on the wonderful care of God for this slave people in Egypt. Remember how God, in the selection of His chosen people, had passed by the mighty kingdoms of Egypt and Assyria, and had allowed His choice to fall on the obscure Jewish slaves. It was this call of God, this evidence that God loved them and had given them a work to do, that transformed them from serfdom to the rank of a nation through whose life the world's redemption was to be fulfilled.

3. But God not only called the children of Israel to be His sons; He trained them for sonship. He called them from servitude to freedom. Is such freedom mere liberty to do as one pleases? What means had God used? Read 11:2. Note the paternal tenderness of vs. 3. Here is the picture of the father caring for his child, bearing him on his arms, teaching him to walk, before the child could appreciate the meaning of such fostering care.

4. Here again the figure changes. Read vs. 4. What metaphor does the prophet employ? Is it not the figure of the driver coming down from his cart to lift the yoke and cheer the dumb beast whose load is too heavy to be drawn? How adroitly Hosea can change from the figure of careless childhood to that of man in the hard work-a-day world plodding along under burdens, grinding and heavy. Does God let us feel His presence when our burdens are heaviest? Like the humane driver, "He comes and takes us by the head; and through the mystic power which is above us, but which makes us like itself, we are lifted to our task." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Second Day. The Character of God (continued).

"How am I to give thee up, O Ephraim?
How am I to let thee go, O Israel?
How am I to give thee up?"

1. As the prophet continues his pleading we forget that it is he who is speaking; it is as if it were God Himself stooping down over His beloved child, pleading with him to come back and accept the Father's love. Read Hos. 14:1-3. At last the writer, with true insight into his message, feels that Israel has heard; and in the beautiful language of hope, he pictures Israel returning to God. Note the intimate dialogue form in which Israel renounces her trust in foreign help and in foreign gods. Read God's reply, 14:4-6. It is the figure of the future, of the restored Israel. Then the prophet speaks in vs. 7, and God answers in vs. 8. Imagine the joy that would come to a father's heart when he felt that his fond dream had come to realization.

2. But over the prophet there comes an immediate change of feeling; is the pleading of any avail; does Israel after all respond to the memory of her childhood; will the dream really come true? Read 11:5-7. The first part of vs. 7 holds the key to the whole matter. Was Israel's lamentable plight God's fault?

3. Again, fatherhood in God rises above justice and wisdom. It is the fatherhood which cannot relinquish the hope that some time the child will return and respond to the call of love. Read vss. 8, 9. Admah and Zeboim were cities by the Salt Sea which had been utterly destroyed because of their guilt. Note the reason for this continued entreaty in vs. 9. "For I am God and not man, the holy one in the midst of thee." It is the character of God, the character of fatherhood and forgiving love.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37.)

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Third Day. The Knowledge of God.

1. Underlying the specific sins openly manifest in Israel's life, and constantly reiterated in the prophet's invective, is the nation's unpardonable ignorance about God. Review Hos. 4:6; 4:1; 5:4, and recall the relation of open crime to this lack of knowledge. It was a lack of understanding, that is, of a sense of appreciation, which wrought such havoc in Hosea's home; it was that which likewise brought Israel's estrangement from God.

2. But what does Hosea mean by knowing God? Does it mean more than knowing with the intellect? What contrast is there between seeing and knowing in Is. 6:9: "It is not to know so as to see the fact of, but to know so as to feel the force of; knowledge not as acquisition and mastery, but as impression and passion . . . It is knowledge that is followed by shame, or by love, or by reverence, or by a sense of duty." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

3. There is a lack of knowledge on the part of the people which is characterized as the want of political wisdom and of sensibility to danger. Read 7:9, 11; 12:1. But the greatest ignorance is of God Himself. "They have not known the Lord." Have they remembered God's dealings with them from the early days in Egypt? Does the memory of the leaders and prophets whom God has given them make any impression on their calloused souls? They have forgotten whose people they are. They have ceased to be dependent on God. They have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

4. How closely now, as then, are sin and ignorance related! Recall 4:11-12. The man into whose life no ray of Divine sunshine falls is open to the contagion of sin and shame; and, with equal truth, the man whose vision is blurred by dishonest outlook and impure living can neither know God nor be sensitive to His pleading.

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Fourth Day. The Lack of Repentance.

1. "The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them." Had Israel not been so precious to Hosea he would never have treated her as tenderly as he did. For with each new offence, with each new apostasy he pleads the more earnestly that she return to God.

2. It is interesting to study Hosea's method of dealing with an unrepentant people. He tries to reach (1) the element of pride in the public conscience. Think how such denunciations as occur in Hos. 4:2; 4:14; 10:5-6; 12:1, would sting the heart of a sensitive people. Can a man's pride ever keep him from sin? He tries also (2) to bring about repentance by awakening a consciousness of guilt. Read 9:1; 13:1-3. What other method (3) does he employ in 13:15-16? Still another method (4), used repeatedly as each of the others fail, is the appeal to God's loving care. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." The last and greatest appeal of all (5) is suggested by Hosea's own experience. Who suffered most as a result of Gomer's sin, she or Hosea? What is the most dreadful aspect of the nation's sin, the pain which it brought the nation or the pain which God suffered? Read 11:8. In final analysis, the strongest appeal, the one that ought to crush the pride and bend the will of the most stubborn, is the appeal of God's infinite love and mercy.

3. We have seen how Israel has made answer. 6:1-4. There is no penitence for sin here; no sorrow for the suffering that Israel has caused God; no break with the past; no return to righteousness. And God can only answer "What am I to do with thee, Ephraim?" Repentance is something deeper than words and farther-reaching than verbal praise. It is a genuine sorrow that grips the soul until a man rises and tramples on his sin, loathes it, forsakes it. Nor does it end even there. It does not close with the desire of the prodigal son to return home; it includes the homeward journey, and the long weary days of struggle on his father's farm, while he proves to his father his desire to be reinstated as his son. "Turn thou to thy God; keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God *continually*."

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Fifth Day. The Fatal Loss of the Ability to Repent.

1. One after the other the appeals and threatenings of the prophet come back to him, unheeded like empty echoes. Israel's nerve of pride has ceased to tingle, the conscience of the nation makes no answer to the charge of guilt, love awakens no love in response; even the certainty of oncoming destruction calls forth hardly more than a passing shudder. Israel has lost the capacity to repent. Read again Hos. 12:6, and then note the prophet's comment on the people's answer in vss. 7-11.

2. From the book of Hosea can you draw any other lesson than this, that a man may sin, or a nation may plunge itself into iniquity, until it is powerless to stop? Here is the crux of the whole matter: A man, by decree of Almighty God, has in his own hand the power to make his life or to blast it; he may live on in indifference, in indulgence of open sin, in bitterness of heart, in denial of God, until his will loses the power to accept pardon. Yet God waits with yearning love for the prodigal to come home. There are, alas, prodigals innumerable who cannot return; prodigals who have lost the power to take the first step on the homeward journey. The appeal to pride is of little avail, for there is hardly a spark of self-respecting pride left; the call to conscience only bores them, for their conscience is stone deaf; the love and anguish of the Father's heart evokes at best only a sentimental tear; through a human world of unspeakable riches, they wander with empty souls.

3. Read Matt. 12:31-33. What is the unpardonable sin mentioned in these verses? Is it a word spoken at one time against the Holy Spirit, or is it an attitude of self-centered indifference to the voice of God speaking evermore within us? To whom were the words of Jesus addressed? Is Israel's experience an illustration of this same fact of human experience?

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Sixth Day. The Responsibility of Love.

1. In the progress of human thought and feeling, that is, in the unfolding of what is deepest in humankind, the greatest conception of God's nature that can take captive the mind and heart of man is none other than that which Hosea spent himself so completely to proclaim, namely, that God is love. It is this that makes Hosea the evangelist of the early world.

2. It is an event of tremendous importance when a man first realizes that God is love. The very fact that love is His nature, and that love is the ruling principle of His kingdom, means not only a wide privilege, but a deep responsibility. What truth is set forth in Hosea's attitude toward Gomer? Recall how he loved her (3:1, 2), and what agony her disloyalty caused him. Love unanswered brings bitter pain to him who loves. If it be so for us, what must it be for God?

3. But there is also another side to the matter. The fact that God loves us, and has given us the power of loving, means that we should use that power. Failing to use it, we lose it. "Extirpation by disuse" is one of the most indubitable laws of life. Cf. 9:17. He that refuses to live the life of love, becomes hard, selfish, cynical; alien not only to his human nature, but alien also to God.

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." I John 4:7, 10, 11.

VII. THE SIN AGAINST LOVE.

Seventh Day. "My God will cast them away."

1. But though God is love, He does not force a man to love Him, or even to recognize His love. The power of moral choice God gave man when He made him in His own image and started him on the highway of life. Would it have been better for man had he been created unfree? It is the prophet's deepest sorrow that the love which God yearns to bestow is not Israel's glad choice. Review Hos. 7:13; 9:10; 11:1, 2, 3, 12.

2. "That is the peril and terror of this love, that it may be to a man either heaven or hell. Believe then in hell, because you believe in the love of God, not in a hell to which God condemns men of His will and pleasure, but a hell into which men cast themselves from the very face of His love in Jesus Christ. The place has been painted as a place of fires. But when we contemplate that men come to it with the holiest flames in their nature quenched, we shall justly feel that it is rather a dreary waste of ash and cinder, strewn with snow—some ribbed and frosty Arctic zone, silent in death, for there is no life there, and there is no life there because there is no love, and no love because men, in rejecting or abusing her, have slain their own power ever again to feel her presence." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

3. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:34, 35.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." John 14:21.

"Then shall he (the Son of Man) say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." Matt. 25:41-46.

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Sanders and Kent, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets*, pp. 70-76. G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Part I, Chaps. 18-23.

STUDY VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

First Day. The Historical Situation.

1. While Amos and Hosea were struggling in the northern kingdom to lead their people to a higher morality and a purer faith, there was growing up in Jerusalem, the chief city of the southern state, a loyal, ambitious youth whose fiery sermons against political intrigue, moral abuses and perverted faith were destined to shake the Hebrew nation from border to border. This youth was Isaiah, son of Amoz, the first statesman-prophet.

2. During what reigns did Isaiah live and prophesy? Read Is. 1:1 and cf. 6:1. Can you recall from your study of Amos what King Uzziah had accomplished for Judah? If not, read II Chron. 26:1, 5, 15. Under Uzziah Israel's natural resources had been developed, her commerce built up, her territory enlarged, and her defenses strengthened. Can you imagine what effect the life and power of such a king would have upon an ambitious boy?

3. Likewise, the world at large which Isaiah could study from his vantage point in Jerusalem must have deeply influenced his growing ambition. The larger world was Western Asia and a corner of Africa. Study map. The great empires, Assyria and Egypt, in some ways counterparts of each other, were at the two ends of the known world. Each nation was afraid of the other. Each was jealous of the other's progress. Between them lay the country of the Phœnicians, strong in its wealth and commerce. Upon this nation and her confederated colonies and trading posts, both Assyria and Egypt looked with covetous eyes. Inland from the coast territories of the Philistines were Israel and Judah and their sister states, small and compact, sometimes independent, sometimes tributary to either Assyria or Egypt. Within Judah clamored social and political problems like those that aroused the activity of Amos and Hosea in the north.

4. Assyria's hands were tied by Babylonia, Assyria's former master, but now a rebellious subject state. Egypt dared not move northward because of her own internal dissensions. All the little states between the two turned now toward the great Assyrian power on the east, and now to the less reliable Egypt on the southwest, hoping that if they were attacked by one they would be rescued by the other. Among these states of the ancient world, thus closely thrown together and thus jealous of each other, not one state could move without stirring a wave of fear throughout the rest.

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Second Day. The Vision of Jehovah.

1. It is easy to appreciate the feeling of false security that came to Judah in such troublous times through the strong and able rulership of King Uzziah. In the year 740, however, after a long and prosperous reign, Uzziah died. His son, Jotham, a prince with few of the qualities of his father, succeeded him. This fact, and the insecurity in the world politics of the day, enable one to understand the feeling of apprehension in the minds of the more thoughtful in Judah.

2. In this same eventful year, Isaiah stepped forth from his obscurity. Now his hero worship ceases; now he puts away youthful dreams, and becomes a man, for the sake of the nation in distress. It was in this year that he saw his vision and heard his call. Where was he standing? Read Is. 6:1. Read the account of the vision in vss. 1-4. What is the central figure in the vision? Who surround Him and how are they described? What attributes do they ascribe to God? Were such ideas of God common among the Hebrews? Cf. Ex. 3:1-5; I Sam. 6:20. What do you think the angelic host meant by "holiness"? What effect did the vision have upon Isaiah? Read vs. 5. Why did the prophet feel his unworthiness? Why does he feel that his "lips" rather than his hands, are unclean? Recall the prophetic function.

3. Why do you think the vision came to Isaiah in the temple? It was the place of the people's worship; but how had they treated it? Read Is. 1:13. Was it not here that the prophet's conscience had been most aroused? What a wonderful vision this is! How it breaks beyond the shaking threshold and temple confines! How the language struggles to express the inner spiritual appreciation of the holiness and majesty of God! Standing on the earth the young Isaiah has looked into heaven; in the midst of his people's sin he has seen a vision of what they ought to be; conscious of his own unworthiness, he has been brought face to face with the transcendent holiness of God; and the vision has crushed him.

4. Nor is it altogether different to-day. God is ever seeking to give us visions of Himself and of our duty. Sometimes they rise out of the ashes of our own past mistakes. Sometimes they flood in upon us as we enter the door of a great opportunity. Sometimes they flash upon us as we stand before an appalling crisis. What form will the vision take when it comes to you? That will depend on where you are and what you are doing and the clearness of your sight. Perhaps it may come to you as a new and inspiring vision of the holiness of God, or of the purity of the Christ:

> "No face: only the sight
> Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
> With a hem that I could recognize."
>
> 51 BROWNING'S *Christmas Eve.*

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Third Day. "Here am I, send me."

1. It was not enough for Isaiah to have the vision of God's holiness. Before he could go out to his work there must come to him a call and a commission. But how can he be first freed from the consciousness of sin?

2. Read Is. 6:6, 7. Does Isaiah, following the custom of the time, offer an animal sacrifice in the temple? What does he do? Is this a symbol of real repentance? Instead of beholding the body of some victim burning for his sin, he feels that from his own sinful lips the fire of purification must burn the guilt away. "In the Divine Presence, Isaiah is his own altar; he acts his guilt in his own person, and so he feels the expiatory fire come to his very self directly from the heavenly hearth." Like all true repentance it is personal and from the heart.

3. Now that the sin has been purged away, Isaiah can hear the call of God. And to this voice he makes answer. Read vs. 8. Does God call Isaiah or does he issue a general call? Does he try to force Isaiah to do this work for him? In what spirit does Isaiah make answer, and what is the significance of his acceptance?

4. Then follows the commission. It is the solemn charge of God to the servant who has taken upon himself the pledge to work for Him. Read carefully vss. 9-13. What do you think then is the meaning of the commission in vss. 9, 10? Do you think God actually told Isaiah to make this charge to his people? Notice the implication that all the natural, God-given faculties shall be turned to a use contrary to that for which they were originally intended. Do you think that this accords with the holiness and love of God?

5. May this not be the interpretation: that the story of Isaiah's call was written late in his ministry in order to give his faithful disciples some account of the way in which he became a prophet, and that he naturally read into the account the character of the reception which the people gave his message? The people had spurned him, despised his entreaties and rejected his counsels. During the long and dreary years through which he walked alone, still must he hear God's voice. Though the hearts of the people be fat and unimpressionable; though the eyes of the people be dim that they cannot see; though their ears be heavy that they cannot hear; yet he has seen, heard and accepted his commission, and therefore he cannot turn back.

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Fourth Day. Isaiah's Apprenticeship.

1. Chapters 2 to 4, in their present form, give us three pictures of the capital city, Jerusalem. They are the impressions which the problems of the city and nation have made upon the sensitive prophetic consciousness. The first and third portray the ideal city of God, the second the real Jerusalem of Isaiah's day.

2. Read Is. 2:2-4. How is the city pictured? What will Jerusalem's position be among the nations of the earth? In what spirit will they recognize Jehovah? What position will Jehovah have among the nations of the earth? What wonderful picture is contained in vs. 4? It is the picture of the universal kingdom of God, with Jerusalem as its center.

3. But alas, how unlike this ideal picture is the real Jerusalem! Suddenly the picture changes. Compare the following verses and note carefully the searching contrasts between the ideal and the actual. Compare vss. 5 and 6 with vs. 3. Compare the worship described in vs. 8 with that of vs. 3. Read vss. 7, 9-11, and compare with vs. 4. Read vss. 12-19, and contrast with vs. 2. Remember with what exaltation Isaiah went forth from the vision in the temple to begin his work. How often a man's most ambitious dreams take flight before the grovelling actual. And yet, no true prophet blinks the facts or is cowed by them, however appalling they may be.

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Fifth Day. The Seeds of National Decay.

1. The black cloud of anarchy overshadowed the city. Read Is. 3:1-3. The substantial elements of the city's life were passing away. What was the real character of Judah's rulers? Cf. vs. 4. Instead of justice and mercy, what principles governed men in their relations with one another? Vs. 5. Where were the rulers? Read vss. 6, 7. What a dramatic picture of the pass to which society has come!

2. Now comes the proclamation of the calamity so often announced by Amos and Hosea. Cf. vs. 8. Jerusalem must fall. Read again chapter 2:2. How far away this is from the ideal picture! How it must have hurt Isaiah, the noble patriot, to utter such a prophecy! Could it have seemed other than heresy and treason thus to predict the end of all that had been holiest and best in his nation's history? Jerusalem must fall. It is not Isaiah's judgment; it is God's judgment through him. "The eyes of the glory of the Lord burn through every rank and condition of society until all lies bare and open." Cf. Chapter 2:9. None escapes, whether righteous or wicked. Read 3:9-11. Who are to blame for it all? Read vss. 12-15.

3. With bitter sarcasm Isaiah lays bare the vanity of the women of the city. Read rapidly 3:16 to 4:1. How unprofitable seemed all such vanities when the city was about to perish. This display covered, but did not conceal, cruel and corrupt hearts; but now even the more natural cravings of the heart for marriage and motherhood would be denied. Cf. 4:1. The daughters of Israel had forgotten that they were daughters of God.

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Sixth Day. The Vision of the Restored City.

1. An ordinary patriot would have been overwhelmed with despondency, but the inspired prophet sees beyond present conditions, and dark though they are, beholds for the future a vision of good. Read carefully Is. 4:2-6. In what respect does this picture correspond to the one found in 2:2-4? Note the quiet simplicity of the verses, the humility, the sense of rest after the storm. Note the national pride in 2:2. Is there any such pride in 4:2-6? Note the exaltation of the city in 2:2-3. Is the city itself glorified in 4:2-6? Note the relative prominence of Jehovah's activity in the two passages. Compare also the absence of any reference to a divine judgment upon Jehovah's people in 2:2-4, and its fundamental importance as a means to salvation in 4:2-6. Read carefully 4:4-5, and note the result of God's work as described in 4:3.

2. Here is the prospect of the city, redeemed and restored. It is not the sentimental outlook of a disillusioned realist; it is not the fancy of an ecstatic dreamer; it is a vision of spiritual triumph, of victory through the grace and power of God.

3. Grant, O Holy One, that the foul stains of our cities may be washed away. May Thy spirit of justice burn away the evil and reveal the good. Inspire in each heart a deep sense of the responsibility and sanctity of citizenship. May the ties of brotherhood and mutual helpfulness bind together all classes. Help those who are called to rule to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Thee, the Source of all justice and love. Help us to be faithful citizens of both Thy earthly and Thy heavenly kingdoms. This we ask in the name of Him who wept over the sins of the ancient city. Amen.

VIII. ISAIAH'S CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Seventh Day. The Underlying Principles.

1. The call of the prophet and the three-fold vision may mirror your life and mine. Do you know what it is to have your heart burn within you, to be lifted clear above yourself, to be blessed with the vision of the man you may be and ought to be? Perhaps the vision has been evoked by some dear memory of the past; perhaps it has overtaken you in the throng and press of life, or in the solitude of the woods, or as you have walked under the stars; perhaps it has come in response to some master strain of music or some master word of life; perhaps it has lifted itself unbidden, as you have faced heroically some painful trial in your own life or some call to difficult duty for the common weal. Cherish the vision, however it has come; it is the immortal in you! It is a holy visitant to shame away your sordidness and selfishness and sin, and liberate all your powers for the service of Him who loves us and gives Himself to us.

2. Perhaps the vision has transformed your life and sent you forth, as it sent Isaiah, with a sense of noble mission. And have you, likewise, met the shock? Has ignorance and misery wrung your heart; has luxury smiled a sickly smile at your plea for simpler life; has low-browed corruption and canting greed undermined your effort for social well-being; has Worldly-wise sneered at your holiest ideals; has doubt held in derision your faith both in man and God; have you met all this and felt it to the bottom of your soul—then rejoice and be glad, you are of the great and noble company of prophets who hold the future of the world in their hands.

3. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, that the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." II Tim. 4:7, 8.

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SANDERS and KENT, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 79-91; *Isaiah, His Life and Times,* in the *Men of the Bible* series. KENT, *History of the Hebrew People, pp.* 127-133. G. A. SMITH, *Book of Isaiah,* Vol. I, Part I, Chaps. 2, 4.

STUDY IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

First Day. The Social Conditions in Judah and Their Causes.

1. In the realistic vision of the present Jerusalem (Cf. Study VIII., Fifth Day), Isaiah disclosed some of the social evils which had become a fatal menace to Judah's life. Recall the lack of sturdy leaders in public positions (Is. 3:2), the want of sympathy on the part of one class for another (3:5), the foolish extravagance and love of display (3:16), the merciless treatment of the poor at the hands of the rich (3:15).

2. In this study we shall take up, step by step, some of the more glaring social abuses which Isaiah's sensitive mind was quick to see; we shall notice how apparently oblivious were the people themselves to the conditions threatening them and to the punishment impending.

3. But what were the causes of these deep-seated social abuses? Is. 2:8 contains more than a passing suggestion of the difficulty. What light does 2:17 shed upon the problem? What is the thought in 3:12 in its relation to the present question? But why do all such secondary causes as these references exemplify exist? Is the fundamental difficulty similar to that which Hosea described? Cf. Hosea 4:6 and review Study VII., Third Day. Then read Is. 5:13.

4. What great teaching have Hosea and Isaiah here given to their world and to ours? Formulate it in your own words. What is the core of the teachings of Christ? Cf. Paul's testimony in Ephesians 1:15-17: "For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus, which is in you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Second Day. The Parable of the Vineyard.

1. Since the general denunciation of Judah's social vices (discussed in last week's study), the people had probably considered and discounted its truth. In the chapters now before us, we shall find that Isaiah explains more carefully and emphasizes more completely the truths already proclaimed.

2. The difficulty was the same as that to which Amos referred. Read Amos 3:2. To the task of overcoming the popular fallacy, the young prophet Isaiah brings remarkable tact. He first commands attention by requesting permission to sing a vineyard song. The theme and the meter, associated as they were with the most joyful event in Isaiah's life, at once attract attention. Read Is. 5:1-7. In imagination we can see the people crowding about him as he sings of the vineyard on the fruitful hill. While they, like David of old before Nathan, are nodding assent to the prophet's questions (vss. 3-6), quick as a flash comes the personal application, and behold (vs. 7) they stand condemned by their own witness.

3. Notice the fidelity of the parable to the relation between Judah and God. Reflect upon God's care for Israel through leaders and prophets. Does it seem natural that God's love and watchfulness should eventuate in "wild grapes"? Think of all that God and Christ have done for our nation and for ourselves. Read again Is. 5:7. If oppression and misery and crime follow upon God's husbandry, is not the fact unnatural? God has done His part for the vineyard. What have we tried to do?

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Third Day. The Fruits of Reckless Selfishness.

1. But the parable of the vineyard must be interpreted and applied. Isaiah has told his audience that the vineyard contains only wild grapes. He now explains what the wild grapes are. His explication is expressed in a series of passionate "woes." Read Is. 5:8-10, 17. How would you phrase in your own words this "woe"? Does Micah 2:2 suggest the answer? Remember that the parable of the vineyard lays bare a misuse of God's husbandry. The first woe deals with the abuse of a divine trust. It is the misuse of land and property privileges. Notice that Isaiah says nothing about the peculiar land laws of his people. He lays down principles. And principles, if they be true, are valid for every age and civilization. There is danger present, says Isaiah, when the rich, absorbing easily the land and property of the many, fatten themselves upon their own possessions, and the poor have no place to lay their heads and no means of satisfying their hunger. Isaiah suggests no legal remedy, but he asserts that the use of land and property is of concern to God and that all men have the right to an equality of opportunity.

2. In vss. 11-16 Isaiah describes the second social evil. We have noticed that in the first woe the crime of the rich was a selfish appropriation of the nation's limited natural resources. Against what is this second woe directed? Wherein does the great danger lie? What is the direct result of this abuse of one's own life? Read vss. 12, 13. Isaiah's strong figure (vs. 14) has lost none of its pertinence. The disease and poverty and crime which statistics heap upon the drink evil haunt thoughtful men to-day; here in our midst "Sheol has enlarged its desire and opened its mouth without measure."

3. Isaiah's third woe concerns those who put forth all their energies in wrongdoing (vs. 18), and then defy Jehovah to smite them (vs. 19). The fourth woe is directed against Israel's sophists (vs. 20) who declare their evil actions good and thus pervert their own moral sense and that of the community. The fifth woe (vs. 21) is against those who are too full of self-satisfied conceit to appreciate their own ignorance and moral depravity. Again, in vs. 22, the prophet reverts to those who devote themselves to strong drink and thereby corrupt the fountains of justice. Then, in an announcement of speedy retribution (vs. 24), such as one would expect from Amos or Hosea, we get the meaning of the "wild grapes" parable. The cause of the blighted fruitage is not greed alone nor appetite alone; it lies deeper than both; it is, "Because they have rejected the instruction of Jehovah and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Fourth Day. The Anger of the Lord.

1. The prophet's description of God's judgments upon Israel is cast in titanic language. "The elements of nature and the elemental passions of man have been let loose together; and we follow the violent floods, remembering that it is sin that has burst the gates of the universe, and given the tides of hell full course through it. Over the storm and battle there comes booming like the storm bell the awful refrain, 'For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.'" G. A. SMITH, *Isaiah.*

2. Read Is. 5:25. To what does "therefore" refer? Note the realistic description of the earthquake. How may an earthquake verify God?

3. What effect did such calamities produce upon the people of Israel? Read 9:8-10. Disaster fails to make some people thoughtful. Israel evidently tried to forget both the calamity and the cause. What new reminder of His power does God send upon them? Read 9:11-12. Note the significance of vs. 13.

4. In 9:14-17 Isaiah describes the devastations of war. Who is at fault for this war? Upon whom does the horror of the defeat fall? Why has the Lord no pity on the young men, widows and orphans? The horrors of war reveal how closely bound together are the fortunes of all classes in a community. Not even God himself could protect the widows and orphans from the consequences of the errors committed by the nation's leaders.

5. In 9:18-21 the prophet describes the horrors of internal anarchy. Read thoughtfully vss. 19, 20. The animal fire of men has been fanned into a hot flame until they rave like beasts of the field or roar like the lions of the desert. The scene is like the anarchy of the Roman proscriptions, or the fury of the French Revolution, where each party sought the life blood of its rival, forgetting to cover its own throat in its murderous attack.

> "If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
> Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses
> 'T will come
> Humanity must preforce prey on itself
> Like monsters of the deep."
>
> *King Lear.*

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Fifth Day. The Fate of the Lawless Nation.

1. Isaiah turns to the future and, with prophetic insight, declares the coming fate of the lawless nation. He is speaking to his own countrymen in Judah. What is the reason for this threat of captivity? Cf. Is. 10:1-2. Do not read these verses as the deliverances of a fanatical reformer. Do not treat them either as the mere iteration of Amos and Hosea. Such men do not clamor for trifling causes nor struggle for unattainable dreams. Injustice, oppression, grinding poverty cry out to heaven, and they demand an answer. What shall the answer be? The unjust countrymen of Isaiah make no answer. Read 10:3-4. What, therefore, does he prophesy? What is to be their fate?

2. But the nature of the captivity must be explained. Jehovah has tried in every way to touch the conscience of the nation. It will not respond. What does he now do in 5:26? How do the enemies of Israel answer his call? 5:27. Read the grim account of their attack; note also their readiness for battle and almost animal-like appetite for blood. 5:27-29. One verse tells the story of the conflict, 5:30. Through all the recital one feels the roll of the dread word,

> "For all this His anger is not turned away,
> And His hand is stretched out still."

3. The stern warning against the dangers of sin had been sounded over and over again. Israel made one response only. Read 9:10. Her answer was an answer of proud derision. She was blind to the real nature of her calamity. Wise is the man or nation that knows how to act under the stress of trial; to attempt to ignore it or to mistake its meaning is blind folly; to listen humbly to its message is to hear the entreaty of God Himself.

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Sixth Day. The Later Portrait of the Perfect King.

1. Investigation of social conditions not infrequently produces a pessimistic attitude toward the prevailing social system. An agitator seizes at random an odious fact, and uses it as the text for a sermon against those who are rich or those who are in authority. A prophet, on the other hand, is not a mere iconoclast. To be worthy the name of prophet he must know things as they are; he must also trace the relation of existing conditions to their causes. He must, further, have a definite and worthy ideal and be able to point out the way to attain it.

2. Thus far in this study, Isaiah's efforts have been directed mainly to the denunciation of social evils. It was evidently his purpose to arouse the conscience of his nation to a higher morality and a greater sense of individual and social responsibility. The nation made no satisfactory response. But one thing more remains, namely, to present the ideal of what ought to be. The question whether this was done by Isaiah or, as is held by a growing body of scholars, by one of his later disciples, is unimportant; the ideal is best studied in the light of its present setting.

3. It will not be difficult to understand the character of this ideal, if we keep in mind the definite situation which Isaiah's sermons revealed. Read Is. 3:1, 2, 15. Read 7:1, 2. What was Israel's sorest need? It is noticeable that these pictures of the Perfect King have for their present background the reign of Ahaz. Ahaz was selfish, cowardly, a traitor to the best interests of his nation. The nation was likely to fall a prey to Assyria or Egypt. The crisis demanded an able, brave, considerate leader. The picture, therefore, is of the Ideal King, the Perfect Leader, who shall rally the nation and save it from anarchy within and the invader from without.

4. Study the first picture in 9:1-7. Determine what this King shall do. Notice the contrast between the dark background of Ahaz's reign and the light of the coming day. The burden of the oppressor shall be broken; war shall be no more. Cf. II. Sam. 7:8-16. What is the new King's four-fold name? The name describes the character of the perfect ruler. Contrast "Wonderful Counsellor" with the foolishness of Ahaz; "God-like Hero" with the cowardly acts of Judah's reigning king; "Everlasting Father" with Ahaz's selfish disregard for the welfare of his subjects; "Prince of Peace"—the one who will bring strength and harmony into life—with the warlike policy of Israel's leaders. None of Israel's later rulers realized this exalted ideal, until at last the Perfect Prince of Peace established his eternal rule, not at Jerusalem, but in the hearts and lives of men.

IX. ISAIAH'S SOCIAL SERMONS.

Seventh Day. The Ideal King and Kingdom.

1. A companion picture is found in Is. 11:1-5. What is the meaning of the figure in vs. 1? How is this prince distinguished from the rulers whom Isaiah denounced? Study the attitude of this new ruler toward the poor and the wicked. With what spirit will he rule? What is his relation to God? Notice that he "will not judge according to that his eyes see or his ears hear."

2. Read also the character of the ideal kingdom as set forth in 11:6-10. It is to be the great era of peace, the golden age when even the hostility of the brute creation shall give way to love.

3. But there is a further element to these prophetic portraits which later generations have cherished. Back of this ideal picture there is the steadfast faith of a man who knows that Jehovah is a living God. However weak, however hopeless the condition of the nation or the character of the king, he always knows that God lives and that his "zeal" will make the wrong things right. "Some day," said the faith of this God-inspired prophet, "the ideal will be realized, salvation will come, and men will gladly call their deliverer, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. That was as far as the prophetic insight and faith could anticipate the Divine purpose.

4. But to us has been vouchsafed a fuller knowledge. The revelation which to Israel was but a glimmer on the edge of the night breaks as a glorious sunrise in Jesus Christ. In the light of that life we know what God is and what man is, and the knowledge inspires us with courage and cheer.

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STUDY X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

First Day. The Situation.

1. About the year 737 B. C. the king of Judah consummated an alliance with Assyria which was destined to work destruction in the land of the "chosen people." Isaiah has recorded only the briefest summary of the events. Read Is. 7:1. Uzziah, the benign and powerful monarch, had been dead three years. His grandson, Ahaz was now on the throne. He was a "perfect type of the Oriental despot, capricious, extravagant, profligate, cruel, acknowledging only his own will as the highest law." CORNILL.

2. A more detailed story of the situation is depicted in II. Kings 16. Vss 1-4 describe Ahaz's personal character and the nature of his rule. Samaria and Aram (incorrectly called Syria) had been trying to effect a Pan-Syrian alliance against Assyria. Evidently they had tried to induce Ahaz to enter their coalition. This he refused to do. Aroused by Ahaz's weakness and cowardice, and bitterly revolting against the tribute which they had been forced to pay Assyria, Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, king of Samaria, planned a joint attack against Judah. Find Samaria, Damascus and Judah on the map. The attention of the king of Assyria had been absorbed for two years by events in the Far East; but it was the wildest folly for such small kingdoms to weaken themselves by internal warfare when such a mighty conqueror was eager for spoil.

3. The joint attack was partially a success. Judah was driven out of Edom and Jerusalem threatened with siege. In his distress Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, for help. It was speedily given. Read II. Kings 16:7-9. A little later Samaria and Aram were conquered and made subject States. Ahaz had invited the aid of the great conqueror. The fatal alliance had been consummated and sealed with tribute money. Cf. II. Kings 16:8. This decision of Ahaz vitally affected Judah's political and religious life for the next thirty years. We shall now see what part Isaiah took in the crisis.

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Second Day. Isaiah's Interview with Ahaz.

1. Ahaz's dangerous plotting reached the ears of Isaiah. Is. 7:2 reveals the temerity of both king and people. The king and his advisers were making preparations for the siege, and Ahaz was inspecting the city's water supply. Isaiah, with his son—whose prophetic name, Shear-jashub, means a remnant shall return—met the king at the upper pool. Read 7:3.

2. The most profitable method of studying Isaiah's conduct in this crisis is to contrast it with that of Ahaz. What is Isaiah's advice in 7:4? "Damascus and Aram," he says, "are only stumps of smoking firebrands. Do you think they can set Judah on fire?" Read vss. 5-9. "The head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. Are you afraid of him? Take unto you the shield of faith. You have lost your head among all these things. Hold it up like a man behind that shield; take a rational view of affairs. Rate your enemies at their proper value. Believe in God. Faith in Him is the essential condition of a calm mind and a rational appreciation of affairs." G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*.

How transcendent a faith this seems beside the timorous cowardice of Ahaz. Ahaz's vision could penetrate no farther than the attack of Samaria and Aram. Isaiah could see Assyria, and back of everything, God. "Faith" was his watchword. God was over everything. "See Him," he said repeatedly, "and all else will appear in its true proportions." Is not this true in all the crises of life, whether they be great or small? How can we gain a clear vision of God and keep that vision undimmed?

"Once to every man and nation comes
The moment to decide
In the strife of Truth and Falsehood,
For the good or evil side."

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Third Day. The Sign to the King.

1. Ahaz had determined upon his policy. He could not be persuaded to alter it. He believed that Assyria offered the only solution to the impending disaster. With confidence born of God, Isaiah made one more appeal. Read vs. 10. It was a brave challenge from the prophet of faith: "Ask a sign anywhere of Jehovah, thy God. He will reveal to you the danger of this plan."

2. Was the belief in signs firmly fixed in the days of the prophets? Read I Sam. 12:17-18; I Kings 13:1-3. To whom were signs usually given and for what purpose? Recall Jesus' teaching as you attempt to answer the question. Who demanded the signs from Him and what was His answer? Read Matt. 12:38-39. Sometimes a crisis, or the stupidity and prejudice of those in authority, seem to make necessary a sign from heaven that truth may be established and confidence restored. Signs are sometimes used to force faith. It is by their attitude toward signs that men are distinguished from each other; an appeal to conscience and service is enough for wise and true men; the weak and halting must see a visible sign.

3. What do you think Ahaz meant by his reply in vs. 12? Read now the prophet's answer, and note the sign which he gives. Here again is a sharp contrast. Isaiah wanted Ahaz to ask for a sign of salvation. The sign which Isaiah is forced to give is the exposure of the fatality of Ahaz's choice. Read vss. 13-17. Can you explain Isaiah's riddle? A young woman shall bring forth a child, and he shall eat curds and honey—the food of privation—(cf. vss. 21, 22) and before the child shall reach the age of discretion the land of Aram and Samaria shall be laid waste, and Judah shall be the spoil of Assyria.

4. Read again vs. 14. The name of the child is Immanuel, God-with-us. How dear the hope of a glorious Davidic prince had been to Israel's heart! And now "Ahaz had by his unbelief not only disestablished himself; he had mortgaged the hope of Israel. . . . His resolve will devastate the golden future and disinherit the promised king." G. A. Smith, *Isaiah.* So one man's obstinacy becomes a nation's ruin; and one man's folly a death of hope. How great a solidarity exists in every society. "No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself."

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Fourth Day. Isaiah's Predictions Regarding Judah.

1. Isaiah goes on to disclose the shortsightedness of the king's policy. What a cost Judah must pay for this temporary rescue! In Is. 7:18-25 Isaiah gives a series of pictures which describe the oncoming desolation. How would you characterize them in your own words? Read 7:18-19. What is the picture in 7:20? Note the picture of extreme destitution in vss. 21-22. Remember that curds and honey are the food of privation. What a picture of complete desolation is given in vss. 23-25! But to all these appeals the king makes no answer.

2. The truth which Isaiah has revealed to his monarch with such ill success must be heralded abroad that the people may see and act themselves. This was always Isaiah's method. He regarded the people as ultimately responsible; and by their judgment he felt that the nation must stand or fall.

3. Read 8:1-4. Note the graphic manner in which Isaiah makes known his unwelcome prediction. What is the significance of the "great tablet"? He is to write upon it in the language of the common people that it may thus be recognized. Look up the marginal reading for the meaning of the name which is given the prophet's son. It is a harsh sounding, crashing word, and one can hear in it the coming of the distant foe. Within a year or two (vs. 4) the enemies of Judah shall be the spoil of the Assyrian conqueror.

4. Are you not impressed by the certainty with which Isaiah delivered this message? How can you account for such confidence as he manifests in the truth of his prediction?

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Fifth Day. The Loss of National Enthusiasm.

1. A weak and often-subject nation frequently regards its own resources and power as of little consequence in comparison with the superior strength of the nations which surround it. The growing nation is similar to the growing boy. There is a time, after he comes in contact with the world, when all his former plans and friends seem cheap, and he affects a more ambitious manner and more assuming companionships. Judah had come in contact with the great Eastern civilizations. How poor she seemed to herself, how cramped and dwarfed her little aqueduct "Shiloah" (Is. 8:6), when compared with the rivers of Samaria and Aram.

2. There was danger in such a policy, as Isaiah hastens to point out. Read 8:5-8. What will be the effect of this search for outside help? It was a great calamity for a people to lose its enthusiasm for the native land in which its youth was spent and its strength developed. It was a worse thing to lose the faith in God that was the foundation and the inspiration of that national patriotism.

3. Yet through it all Isaiah never loses his vision. It is the same vision that he saw in the temple, the vision of God's power and holiness. What matters it that the people take counsel together, vss. 9, 10? God had spoken, and He was with Judah. He could neither conspire with them nor share their fear, vs. 11. Only one in all the world shall be feared or worshipped—Jehovah of hosts, vs. 12. Note the striking figure in vss. 14, 15. The stone could be an altar of safety to those who recognized it; or a stone of stumbling to those who knew it not.

4. Throughout Isaiah's theology we find the thought, "A remnant shall return." Whenever Isaiah feels that judgment is inevitable and that sure destruction is coming, he always utters the heaven-born hope of the noble remnant—the future Kingdom of God. So here, vss. 16-22, he gathers about him a band of kindred spirits, whom he calls his disciples, to "bind up the testimony and seal the law" for him and them. They shall be a refuge in the times when wise men fail and prophets cease, vss. 19, 20. In the reactionary days of Manasseh and in the great reformation of Josiah, Isaiah's faith in his disciples was amply justified.

5. Countless are the men and women who have been kept and inspired by the testimony which is "bound up" in the Bible. It has been the palladium of sober, honest, righteous living throughout the centuries.

"O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth, unchanged, unchanging,
O light of our dark sky;
We praise Thee for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps
Shines on from age to age."

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Sixth Day. Isaiah's Pictorial Sermons.

1. We shall turn for a little from the events of the crisis of 737 B. C., in which Isaiah's warnings were disregarded, to the other crisis in 711 B. C., in which he humiliated himself for the sake of his nation. The Assyrians had fastened their yoke upon Judah, as Isaiah had foretold. In 715 B. C. Ahaz was succeeded by his own son Hezekiah, a man who was easily influenced by his councillors. The national party, which favored an alliance with Egypt in order to throw off the Assyrian bondage, attained supremacy over the king. Sargon was king of Assyria. He was a brilliant warrior-king, whose campaigns were replete with victorious conquests. It was folly to revolt against him.

2. When in 711 B. C. the national party was about to yield to the promises of Egypt, Isaiah acted out one of his most striking pictorial sermons. Read chapter 20. Isaiah appeared in the streets as a prisoner of war. What did his action symbolize? How would it affect the people? Here again Isaiah, as in chapter 8, has taken his case before the bar of the people. It was a way of challenging the people to come and reason together. Egypt was a "big mouthed, blustering power, believed in by the mob; to expose her Isaiah must resort to a public, picturesque and persistent advertisement."

3. Compare the different methods used by Isaiah to impress his message on the minds of the people. The influence of the prophets depended not only on the greatness of their message, but upon the great devotion with which they used every legitimate means to proclaim it. Isaiah cared so much for his people that he willingly faced ridicule and the danger of being misunderstood, provided only the truth might find expression. Have we any such devoted prophets in our day? Cite some definite examples.

X. ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY IN THE CRISIS OF 737 B. C.

Seventh Day. Isaiah's Work as a Statesman.

1. Review the work for the week and write out your conception of the statesman-like qualities which Isaiah has revealed in these crises.

2. In what instances, under review, do you think he manifested courage, tact, patience, far-sightedness or faith?

3. In his political activities Isaiah impresses one as primarily a man of faith. He saw things in their right proportions and with true perspective. Amid false public confidence and blind fear and confusion, he kept a steadfast policy and an unfaltering faith. It was not faith in public men, for they were faithless; it was not merely faith in the people, for they did not respond to it. It was always faith in a supreme, holy God. "God," to Isaiah, "was all, man was nothing." Isaiah had a clearly grasped conception of universal history, for he felt that all the nations of the earth were under God's rule, and that they could never successfully oppose His great world-purpose. It was such a vision, such a faith, that made him fearless in this crisis.

4. Isaiah kept his eyes fixed on God. How it disarms men of fear, prejudice and obstinacy when they have such supreme faith. "Let men believe that life has a central authority, that God is supreme, and they will fling their prejudices and superstitions to the winds. When we know that God reigns, how quiet and free it makes us. When things and men are part of His scheme and working out His ends, when we understand that they are not monsters but ministers, how reasonably we can look at them! By the reasonable government of God, let us be reasonable! Let us take heed and be quiet. Have faith in God and to faith will come her proper consequent of common sense." G. A. SMITH, *Isaiah.*

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STUDY XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

First Day. The Historical Situation in 701 B. C.

1. In the year 701 B. C. took place the great political crisis of Isaiah's life. King Hezekiah had been on the throne for fourteen years. For forty years Isaiah had been engaged in his prophetic ministry. During all those years Isaiah had predicted with varying intensity, but with ever-increasing certainty, first, the Assyrian invasion of Palestine, and later the fatal consequences of rebellion against this invincible power. Recall the grounds for these predictions. What had been the prevailing attitude of both Assyria and Egypt toward the smaller countries which lay between them? How would Judah withstand such an invasion of Assyria? Recall the criticisms of her social life, the inability of her leaders, and the temper of her people. Read Is. 2:8; 3:1-4; 3:5; 7:1-2.

2. Isaiah's account of the events of the year is supplemented by the annals of Sennacherib, a work which will be discussed in the fourth day's study. The events are also described in II. Kings 18:13-16. Sennacherib, in his plan of invasion of Palestine, began with the Phœnician cities. Thence, marching southward by the level coastland, he met his most formidable enemy, Egypt, in the southern part of Palestine. Having put to rout the Egyptian forces, he despatched a portion of his army to overrun Judah and Jerusalem. The long-dreaded siege of the city began. Judah, like Northern Israel, had sown the wind, and now must reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7).

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Second Day. The Hour of Jerusalem's Visitation.

1. Already the Assyrian army had arrived in Palestine. The little Judean kingdom was shaking with fear from border to border. The mighty warrior Sennacherib was leading his conquering hosts against her; soon she must actually see the glare of burning cities, the bands of armed horsemen and the flash of glittering steel. Sober reflection gave way to wild tumult; patriotism yielded to intrigue. The king's courage failed and the hearts of the people sank within them. Well may they now remember the prophetic words of Isaiah! Read Is. 5:26-30 and 10:1-4.

2. To whom could the people appeal for assistance? Dire calamity usually drives a community to worship God. And the form of worship will be the form with which the people are acquainted. One can hear the cry throughout the city, "To the sanctuaries of Jehovah, to the sacrifices of burnt offerings; perchance these may save us." What is Isaiah's terrible rebuke? Read Chap. 1:10-15. What a fearful answer to the cry of his clamoring people! "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." The prophetic lesson this people would not learn; now, alas, the time is past!

3. There was one other quarter to which the nation might appeal. For many years Egypt had made flattering advances to Israel. But now Egypt also goes down in disgraceful defeat; and when the news of this disaster reached the city of Jerusalem it seemed as if the city's own deathknell had been tolled. Read Is. 22:1-4 for the prophet's statement of the lost hope.

4. All through his life Isaiah had been struggling against these two dangers: the formal worship of Jehovah and the alliance with Egypt. In the hour of threatening danger his efforts had proved unavailing, and now Assyria was thundering at the gates. The crisis had come. The people were powerless to meet it.

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Third Day. The City in Despair.

1. The whole city was in confusion. Few stopped to reason out the cause. Few were calm enough to suggest plans of action or means of escape. The words of Isaiah are bitter and piercing. Read slowly, and aloud if possible, Is. 1:2-8. Notice the convicting power of the language. What is Isaiah's analysis of the situation and to what folly does he attribute it?

2. Read 1:21-23. Do not these revelations of the city's corruption make clear the reason for the lack of faith and instability of purpose manifesting itself in these crises? The life-long habits of a community or of an individual betoken, unmistakably, the manner in which severe tests will be endured.

3. The city does precisely what we should expect it to do. Read carefully 22:5-14. Notice in vs. 13 the philosophy which despair often begets. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." The city has lost its hope, it has also lost its faith; it has never sincerely trusted God, it cannot trust Him now. So it gives itself over to voluptuous self-indulgence. In the face of such a condition Isaiah can hold out little promise. "Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord Jehovah of Hosts." How truly had been fulfilled the words of the prophet uttered in connection with his call, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of the people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and turn again and be healed." Is. 6:9-10.

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Fourth Day. The Fall of the City.

1. The calamity which the prophets had predicted overtook Israel. Read Amos 6:7; 9:7-10; Hosea 5:13-15; Isaiah 7:18-19.

2. The results of the siege are attested (1) by the Hebrew record in II Kings 18:13-16, and (2) by the two duplicate versions of Sennacherib's account which are preserved in the British Museum. The Assyrian narrative reads:

"But Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his fortified towns, together with the innumerable fortresses and small towns in their neighborhood, with assault and battering rams and approach of siege-engines, with the attack of infantry, of mines . . . I besieged and captured. Two hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty-one persons, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep, without number, from their midst I brought out and counted them as spoil. I shut him (Hezekiah) up like a bird in a cage in the midst of Jerusalem, his royal city. . . . The terror of the glory of my lordship overwhelmed Hezekiah himself, and the nations, and his trusted soldiers, whom he had introduced for the defense of Jerusalem, his royal city, laid down their arms." For a fuller account of the invasion see Vol. II, pp. 499-502, KENT'S *Student's Old Testament.*

3. Isaiah's predictions had been fulfilled; but he did not assert the fact triumphantly. Read Is. 1:18, 16, 17. Notice how he gathered the king and people together. He became their counsellor. Nothing was undertaken without his knowledge and advice. In a song of triumph, of hope and of faith, he brings the people before God in prayer. Read 33:1-6. Amid the desolation of a conquered city he, or some one of his late disciples, sees rising a glorious, restored Jerusalem (33:17-24). Only divinely given courage and faith can inspire such a spirit in the face of disaster.

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Fifth Day. The Last Temptations of Faith.

1. The Assyrian inscriptions, together with the discovery of recent fragmentary texts, seem to indicate that Sennacherib undertook another western campaign some ten years later. His goal was the conquest of Egypt, and he was unwilling to leave such a strong fortress as Jerusalem behind him in the hands of Egypt's former ally. Accordingly he demanded an unconditional surrender. This time Judah had right on her side. Curiously enough the engagement was not to be one of arms, but of speech, a contest between the "subtlest arguments of the world and the bare word of God."

2. The story of this struggle is given in Isaiah 36. Read vss. 1-3. Note that both the kings of Assyria and Judah are represented by ambassadors. The rabshakeh, the deputy from the king of Assyria, is a proud, clever, diplomatic demagogue. Note his arguments.

3. What clever thrust does he make in vss. 4-6? Remember what a sore spot this was to Judah's leaders. Note the attack which he makes in vss. 7-10, and the knowledge he displays of Judah's internal affairs. First he makes sport of the fact that their king has compelled them to give up the worship of Jehovah, except at the Jerusalem altar. Then he boldly says that their God is aiding his army in its conquests.

4. There was danger in such an agitation of the common people. The ambassadors of the king of Judah become terrified. What do they beg the rabshakeh to do in vss. 11-12; why and with what results? His answer to this request is but added plainness of speech to the common people and soldiers, who are dreading the horrors of a siege. What tempting proposition does he make? Vss. 13-17. What convincing argument from actual facts does he deduce in vss. 18-20? What do Hezekiah's representatives now do? Vss. 21-22.

5. What a bitter temptation this was to give up a nation's faith and a nation's God. The horrors of siege were imminent. Was it worth while to stand out for a narrow principle when a "broader way" was presented? How often such temptations come to men to give up their most sacred principles and beliefs for a more worldly method of life. There is extreme danger in it. Beware of the rewards that are offered. They may lead to slavery. "To the heart of man there will always be captivity in selfishness; there will always be exile in unbelief."

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Sixth Day. The Victory Through Faith.

1. Hezekiah and his counsellors were mourning within the gates of the city. They were powerless to suggest any means of escape from the Assyrian army. Their representatives returned from the interview and reported the proposition of the rabshakeh. Is. 37:1 tells how the king and his counsellors received the tidings. Had the nation gone mad? Had it lost all faith in the God of its fathers?

2. What does Hezekiah do according to vss. 2-4? "The children are come to birth, and there is not strength to bring forth." It is the disconsolate cry of one whose faith is so weak that the impulses and plans which it conceives can never be born into action. It is with no great confidence that he sends his message to the prophet, vs. 4. Consider the effect which Isaiah's answer, in vss. 5-7, would have upon the king. The rabshakeh is discomfited, and he returns to his master.

3. It is the hour of the greatest political crisis. If Hezekiah yields to the demands of Assyria, he must forfeit Jerusalem. If he refuses, the army is ready to thunder at the gates. Note carefully his action. Was Isaiah responsible for Hezekiah's action? Read vss. 14-20. In what spirit is the prayer offered, and with what earnest desire?

4. Through the prophet comes the answer from Jehovah. How clear and reassuring it is! Read vss. 21-25. Notice the confidence of the city in the newly-found power of God. Against whom are all these threats uttered? How do vss. 26-29 answer to vs. 10? Read vss. 30-32. They voice the eternal hope of the remnant of Israel. In vss. 33-38 Isaiah once more confidently asserts his belief that the Assyrian army will go away and never more return.

5. What will the result be? Will Isaiah's pleading and prayers and prophecy and faith in Jehovah be of no avail? Witness his triumph! Through his calm faith the nation was saved from humiliating surrender. Read the Hebrew version of the deliverance, vss. 36-38. Herodotus states that an army of field mice came in the night and ate up the quivers and bowstrings of the Assyrians and they fled in rout; the Assyrian annals speak of Sennacherib's hosts retreating to Nineveh. The Hebrew records rightly recognize Jehovah's hand in the sudden deliverance. Whatever be the exact facts, we know that Jerusalem was left unharmed. This was Isaiah's last triumph—the triumph of faith in God, which enabled one man to withstand an army and save his own city and people. Upon his own and later ages it made a profound impression, but it was not Isaiah's greatest victory. **Read again Is. 6:1-8.**

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Seventh Day. Isaiah's Work as a Prophet of Faith in God.

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in time of trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof."

1. This might well have been the text of Isaiah's whole ministry. In every crisis through which he passed, whether of social corruption or political upheaval, he always proclaimed the unchangeable holiness, power and love of God.

2. As you review the studies in Isaiah's life as here outlined, search for this element of unflinching faith. Consider, in this connection, Study VIII, days 2, 3 and 6; Study IX, days 6 and 7; Study X, days 3, 4 and 5; and all of Study XI.

3. Isaiah moves among his disheartened fellows as one different from all the rest. Yet there is nothing other-worldly about him. He is altogether human. But he is living the transformed life. His feet are walking the streets of the city; but his thought is fixed on God. His heart breaks for the sins and faithlessness of his countrymen, but his soul pays allegiance to the Divine King. God had not taken him out of the world. He had kept him in it, and from its evil. He was of the world, yet above it. What a beacon-light was he in the dark and weary land!

4. Review Isaiah's life work: (1) as a statesman; what was his advice at the great crises of 737, 711, 701 and 690 B. C.? (2) As a social reformer. (3) As an ethical teacher. (4) As a theologian.

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also:
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is for ever.

MARTIN LUTHER.

XI. THE TRIUMPH OF ISAIAH'S FAITH.

Seventh Day. Isaiah's Work as a Prophet of Faith in God. (Continued.)

"O God of Israel, God of Isaiah, in returning to Whom and resting upon Whom alone we are saved, purge us of self and of the pride of life, of the fever and the falsehood they breed. Teach us that in quietness and in confidence is our strength. Help us to be still and know that thou art God."

REFERENCES.

SANDERS and KENT, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 103-108, 133-137, 165-169. KENT, *History of the Hebrew People,* Vol. II, pp. 151-158. G. A. SMITH, *Book of Isaiah,* Vol. I, Book IV, Chaps. 19-24.

STUDY XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

First Day. The Countryman Prophet of Judah.

1. About the year 720 B. C. a new prophet appeared in Judah. Amos had been silent thirty years, Hosea fifteen, while Isaiah was at the height of his career. What was his title and during whose reigns did he prophesy? Read Micah 1:1, and compare Jer. 26:18. His family was doubtless unimportant; otherwise his father's name would have been mentioned. Cf. Is. 1:1. Yet it must have been a religious family. His name (Micah being a shorter form of Micaiah) means "Who is like Jehovah?" Is. 8:18 indicates what significance such a name possessed.

2. Where did Micah live? See Micah 1:1 and map. His little home village was situated about seventeen miles west of Tekoa, where Amos had guarded his sheep. Moresheth was separated from the wilderness of Tekoa by the central range of Judean hills. Unlike Amos' country, the valley in which Micah lived was fertile and attractive. Crops were abundant, and there was plentiful herbage for cattle. Moresheth was on the edge of the open coast plains, not far from the Philistine cities, and the dangers of warfare were rarely absent. Read KENT, *History of the Hebrew People,* Vol. II, pp. 134-140. The valley at the entrance to which Moresheth stands has frequently been the gateway by which the invading armies have entered Judah. Already the Assyrians had conquered Northern Israel, and had approached to the northern and western borders of Judah. Could this petty state hope to escape?

3. Little is known of the personal life of Micah; but his character and spirit shine clearly through his work. He is the great champion of the common people. Himself a peasant, his whole nature revolted against the unnatural excesses of the capital city and the grinding oppression of its poor. He is even more of an ethical teacher than his contemporary, Isaiah; unlike Isaiah, he has little to say about political problems. For him the future promised nothing but the annihilation of the capital city and temple. He suffers in common with those whose cause he upholds. What was the attitude of the rulers toward him and his message? Micah 2:6, 7. Like Amos, he was a fearless, rugged, far-seeing herald of judgment. Nor did his influence pass away at his death. Cf. Jer. 26:16. It lived on for a hundred years to inspire others, "a beacon-light to check the vicious and cheer the brave."

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Second Day. The Common Fate Awaiting Israel and Judah.

1. Micah's fearless nature and uncompromising message are best set forth in the first three chapters of his book. At first the prophet speaks. Read Micah 1:2-4. To whom are his words addressed? With what purpose are they uttered? What conception of Jehovah is presented? What are the effects of Jehovah's visitation? The idea of Jehovah's coming in the storm was a common one in Hebrew literature. Read aloud Ps. 29.

2. In Micah 1:5-7, Jehovah speaks. How does vs. 5 combat the popular conception that the Hebrews were Jehovah's especial favorites? What central doctrine of Amos is here repeated? Samaria and Jerusalem, the capital cities, should have been watch-towers of morality and religion for the whole country. What is the condemnation of Samaria? What shall be her fate?

3. In Micah 1:5-7 occurs an abrupt transition. The prophet is speaking. Note how the coming desolation affects him. How far he is from rejoicing in it. Micah's action is symbolic. See Is. 20:2. "Such exuberance of emotion specially characterizes the Jews and Arabs; it reminds us of the Homeric heroes. The prophets did not cease to be men when they received the gift of inspiration. Sometimes they seem to have had a kind of double consciousness, uniting them on the one hand with the inspiring Spirit, and on the other with their much-loved people. Hence their abrupt transitions from stern denunciation to tender compassion." CHEYNE, *Cambridge Bible, Micah.*

4. Micah now foresees the approach of the invader. The hostile army, he imagines, is to come through his own beloved valley. In the name of each village of that valley he finds a suggestion of the destruction that must follow Assyria's advance. This section (vss. 10-16) is full of Hebrew word-plays which cannot all be reproduced in English. Vs. 10, *e. g.*, has thus been translated:

> "Tell it not in Tell-town,—weep not in Weep-town;
> In House of Dust, roll thyself in dust."
> G. A. SMITH, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

The cities are described in the order in which they would most probably be captured in the onward march of the conqueror. The last part of vs. 16 states the issue of the conquest.

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Third Day. Might Does Not Make Right.

1. Micah has expressed with profound assurance his belief in the success of the foreign invasion of Palestine. The ground for such pessimism is not difficult to discover. For Micah, the reason was not to be found in the gaudy fashions of the city, nor the intrigues of the court. These Isaiah had decried. It was not to be found in the prevalent luxury, idolatry nor vicious sensual excess. These things Amos and Hosea had attacked. Nor was the reason to be found in the shifting politics of the day.

2. Micah is the great champion of the poor. Read Micah 2:1-2. Here he attacks the greed of the landed proprietors. How do these men spend their nights? Of what crimes are they guilty? Does not the real injury which they have done the poor lie in the fact that such oppression takes away from men not only their fields and their houses, but also their independence and domestic contentment? Read the prophet's condemnation in 2:3-5. What does he say will happen to the land? The loss of all land wrongfully acquired hardly seems an adequate punishment, but there never can be any restitution of land (vs. 5) in the assembly of Jehovah, for there will be no such assembly left.

3. The rich raise their protest. "Stop your prophesying reproaches," they say in vss. 6, 7. "We are respectable people; we are upright; God can do no harm to us." Then Micah attacks their clamor of selfish glorification. Read vss. 8-10. What outrages have they committed against peace-loving, honest men? What against women and children? "The land is no resting place for you. Your sin deserves only exile."

4. Read the noteworthy comment of the prophet (vs. 11) on the lives of these rich landlords. They were pleased only with that prophetic message which they desired. They accepted as divine only what they wished to hear. Is it not dangerous for a man to listen only to what pleases him? Flattery and success often close men's eyes and ears to the dictum of truth. Frank criticism is a spur to action.

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Fourth Day. The Greed and Guilt of Judah's Leaders.

1. In chapter 3 Micah attacks the authorities of the nation for their criminal disregard of the poor. The striking contrast between this sermon and the preaching of the false prophets, whose attitude he satirizes, affords a true picture of Micah's character.

2. Read Micah 3:1-4. Vs. 1 suggests what the people had a right to expect from their rulers. Cf. Jer. 5:4-5. Misdeeds resulting from ignorance are sometimes excusable; sins committed deliberately and involving widespread suffering are crimes that defy Heaven. How have the leaders treated the poor? Vss. 2-4. "While Micah spoke he had wasted lives and bent backs before him. Pinched peasant faces peer between all his words and fill the ellipses. And among the living poor to-day, are there not starved and bitter faces—bodies with the blood sucked from them, with the divine image crushed out of them?" G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.* The suffering of the French peasants at the hands of the rich lords before the Revolution, the hideous wrongs done to the Russian peasants in our own day, the thousands of toilers in our great cities who have not enough to eat or to wear, the bodies of young children pinched and dwarfed by work which they are compelled to perform at an unlawful age, the women who because of wretched wages are forced to prostitution in order to stave off starvation—all these wrongs burn into one's mind a sense of the great inequalities which have blighted and still continue to blight the lives of our fellow creatures.

3. Furthermore, this system in Micah's day had the support of the hireling prophets. Read 3:5-8. What was the difference between the false and the true prophet? Was it doctrinal or moral? What was the motive for the work of the false prophet? What inevitable result overtakes them? Note the contrast between the true and false prophets in moral discernment.

4. Woe to that land whose prophets are hirelings! Woe to that nation whose men of vision are in league with vice! Social injustice, crimes against the poor and the helpless, all the great inequalities of earth which cry out to Almighty God, will not be done away until the men of this generation, the men of education and talent and faith and Godly fear, rise up together to wage fearless, untiring warfare in behalf of justice and right.

> "Man am I grown, a man's work must I do,
> . . . follow the Christ, the King,
> Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
> Else, wherefore born. Tennyson.

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Fifth Day. The Climax and Effect of Micah's Preaching.

1. Read Micah 3:9-12. Notice the conspiracy that existed between the rulers and the religious leaders. The period was one of great outward prosperity. The city of Jerusalem was larger than ever before. But with what price was it being built! What is the general condemnation of priests, prophets and judges? What false confidence did they all arrogantly display? They were putting their money, thus wrongfully taken from the poor, into the city walls and into the temple. What moral foundation had they laid for the real city? Alas, they had forgotten the foundation; and there could be but one issue. Micah graphically sets it forth in vs. 12.

2. It is of advantage to read in this connection a similar incident in the life of Jeremiah, whose preaching was bitterly opposed by the false prophets. Jer. 26 contains the account of this appalling attack. What was Jeremiah's message (vss. 1-6); what conspiracy did the prophets and princes make against his life (vss. 7-11); how did Jeremiah resist them (vss. 12-15); with what arguments did certain elders defend him (vss. 16-24)?

3. The fearless stand which these two prophets made against the cowardly rulers of their age is both a challenge and inspiration to all men. They were called to preach; others are called to work. Some are called to fight; others are called to pray. But all men in all ages and in all nations are needed to live and struggle for righteousness and truth, and to bring in the Kingdom of God. One of the greatest dangers of this country is that men of ability will, for the sake of selfish peace, adopt an attitude of calm indifference or half-hearted opposition to the great moral and social evils incident to our civilization.

"He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." Matt. 12:30.

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Sixth Day. The Prophetic Definition of Religion.

1. Chapter 6 reports the second trial scene in the book of Micah. In chapter 1 the Lord had appeared as the judge and executioner of punishment. Before the court of the nations of the earth, the Israelites had been proved guilty and deserving of destruction. In chapter 6 there is a complete transition. The prophet is God's "plenipotentiary." He stands before the court to urge Jehovah's case against this erring people.

2. In the trial scene Jehovah speaks, Micah 6:1. Who are the witnesses? Cf. Is. 1:2. The eternal hills are called to listen, "not because they are the biggest of existences, but because they are the most full of memories and associations with both parties to the trial." G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets.* Then the prophet summons the witnesses, vs. 2. Note the majestic solemnity of the language. Before this court of Nature, Jehovah pleads with His people. Read vss. 3-5. What a wonderful appeal to the childhood of Israel! Recall the barriers of superstition, formality, ritualism, unreality, that had kept God aloof from men. In the prophetic conception of religion, God is near; He speaks with, nay, He even pleads with, His people. "Religion is not a thing of authority nor of ceremonial, nor of mere feeling, but of argument, reasonable presentation and debate." To what experiences does Jehovah appeal? What effect ought such tenderness to have had upon the people?

3. Jehovah's mercy and love arouse the emotion long hidden away. Israel asks a pitiful question, vss. 6, 7. He has tried to obey the law, but he has not known how. Here are portrayed earnest seekers after God who have lost their way and are weary. Note the extravagance of the offerings which Israel thinks will please Jehovah.

4. "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good;
And what doth Jehovah require of thee,
But to act justly and to love mercy
And to walk humbly with thy God."

Micah 6:8.

This is the prophet's answer to the sincere desire of the people. It is his definition of religion. "To the people, God was an unlimited despot, ruling arbitrarily, whose wrath, temper, bloodthirst, must be propitiated with costly gifts, and with the offering of one's self or of one's dearest possession. Micah does not compromise with this conception or attempt to modify it; he sweeps it away. Jehovah is a moral being, and he demands a moral offering from the heart of his worshippers." Duhm, *Theology of the Prophets.*

XII. MICAH'S REFORM SERMONS.

Seventh Day. Contrasting Light and Shadow.

1. Thus far, the prophet has predicted the destruction of Israel, of Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah. He has also made clear his belief in a coming national destruction. Review briefly the reasons for his early denunciatory sermons (First to Fifth Days).

2. In Micah 6:9; 7:20 we have the most abrupt changes in style and thought. The background is probably the reactionary reign of Manasseh. Cf. II Kings 20:2-6, 16. In Micah 6:9-16 Jehovah through His prophet pours forth His complaint against the city. How would you describe the sin here attacked? What punishments are threatened? The people are ruled by the cowardly, selfish ambition of the House of Omri, which ended in death. In chapter 7:1-6 the city herself, or possibly only her enlightened conscience, the prophet, laments over her sins. Righteous citizens were no more; there was no longer trust, friendliness, public faith. The poison which had affected the rich landlords and hireling prophets (chaps. 1-3) has now eaten its way into the body politic. Its result is widespread sham and knavery. The passion to become rich and the pitiless rivalry and competition consequent, had developed in Israel a thoroughly corrupt system of trickery and a criminal disregard for the rights of the common people.

3. There is this same grave danger in our national life to-day. The prevalent desire "to get rich" without honest effort has led not only to false advertisements and cheap productions, but employers who demand the greatest amount of labor for the least possible wages and workmen who desire to secure the greatest amount of wages for the least amount of work. It has led producers to feel that their obligation to their employees ceases when the weekly wage is paid; it has caused workmen to feel that their obligation to their employers ceases when the factory closes at night. Is there no corrective for this widespread misunderstanding? Micah has but one solution; Jesus had but one solution. It is contained in Micah 6:8 and in Matt. 7:12. It is a solution in which all men have a share. It demands that every employer shall help his employee to develop his body, mind, soul, family; it means that every workman shall earn by industry and fidelity the necessary wage; it demands that the great body of the consuming public shall pay an adequate price for all productions. Will such a day ever come?

4. The prophets thought it would. Micah 7:7-20.

Seventh Day. Contrasting Light and Shadow. (Cont'd.)

"I will look unto Jehovah;
I will wait for the God of my salvation.
He will again have compassion upon us;
He will tread our iniquities under foot;
And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea."

REFERENCES.

G. A. SMITH, *Book of the Twelve Prophets,* Chaps. 25, 26, 29, 30. *Micah,* in *Cambridge Bible.* KENT, *History of the Hebrew People,* Vol. II, pp. 134-140. KENT and SANDERS, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* pp. 111 ff.

STUDY XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

First Day. The Early Life of the Prophets.

1. In reviewing the life and teachings of these earliest Hebrew prophets, who poured out their lives' best strength that through them God might shape the destinies of their nation, it is natural to consider their work as a whole and to dwell upon those sterling qualities which they possessed in common.

2. Unfortunately little is recorded of their childhood or education. The result of their labors is all that history has bequeathed to us. "By their fruits we know them." But alas, the judgment of men is too often based upon the fruits. Too little do we think of the seed, the soil, the sun, and the gentle showers. As you recall the work of these early men, do you think that their tasks came to them by chance or by undeserved recognition? God does not thus bestow his commissions and gifts. Does not the pioneer work of Moses pre-suppose a training in the essential qualities of leadership? Does not the language of Amos reveal the hours of hidden toil among the beasts of the desert and under the stars of the heavens? Does not the lofty purpose revealed at the beginning of Isaiah's ministry suggest preceding years of faith and confidence in Almighty God? These results were not the work of chance. They were the certain fruition of seed intelligently planted and of husbandry faithfully performed. It is in the great school of experience that God trains the men whom he commissions to be His prophets.

3. Great men are not created miraculously in a moment. They are the result of growth. Whether it is an Amos, plodding his rough way with shepherd's crook over the Tekoan hills; or a Lincoln, poring over his books by the flickering light of a pine knot, the final product—the man who achieves—is but the "far off interest of years."

4. These men waited and prepared for their great commission, not in idleness, nor yet in vain striving; patiently, faithfully, prayerfully, obediently, they toiled and thus they grew. And one day their call rang true and clear, their hour came, and they emerged from obscurity into the light.

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

Second Day. The Call of the Prophets.

1. To the mind of the prophet, his call, when he recited his experience or recorded it in writing for his disciples, was an event of tremendous moment. It was both a goal and a starting point. Here his hidden life ended; here his public life began. The call looked backward to the days of preparation which had made it possible; it looked forward to the days of activity which brought it into being. It was a clear, unmistakable experience, a challenge from the Almighty to work for Him—a challenge which was accepted in the spirit of courage and sublime devotion.

2. Review the circumstances of Moses' call (Study I., First day). How do you account for the calls of Amos and Micah? Note the similarity. How did the call of Hosea differ from that of Isaiah? Although the forms of the various calls were usually different, in what two fundamental respects were they all alike?

3. The early training in ethics and religion had made all these prophets keenly sensitive to the existence of evil, and to the character of God. The discrepancy between conditions as they were in Israel and conditions as they ought to have been, according to the standards of heaven, constituted a mighty challenge to the energy and faith of any man who was zealous for righteousness and for God. There were three ways in which the people of Israel regarded this discrepancy. Some turned their backs upon the piteous appeals of the oppressed, the hideous immorality of priests, princes and common people. Indifference was one way. Some faced the situation as men face an insuperable stone wall. They felt that they could neither climb it nor penetrate it. They therefore gave the case up as hopeless. There were still others, of whom the prophets are the most conspicuous examples, who had too quick a conscience and too vital a faith to be either indifferent or hopeless. When the call came to them to face the facts squarely and to solve all disturbing political, social and moral questions with sanity and godly fear, the prophets accepted that call as a great responsibility and a supreme opportunity to serve God. To their country and to their God they devoted themselves, therefore, with all their God-given faculties of body, mind and heart.

4. Review briefly the different elements that entered into the call of every prophet.

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

Third Day. The Manner in Which the Prophets Learned Their Message.

1. None of the prophets, who have been considered in these studies delivered their entire message in one sermon. Nor was the theme of every sermon the same. Conditions changed rapidly in Israel; new forms of old sins developed; new crimes called for different remedies. No one should suppose that the prophet whose keen eyes could detect the appearance of every new inclination, national and individual, would stand still or utter over and over the same identical message. The prophets were learning their message every day that they lived; and the message of their riper years was a far maturer message than that of their early days. Their messages differed widely in form from each other, and yet there was a wonderful similarity in the basic principles.

2. Where did Moses learn his message? In what environment did Amos begin his critical analysis of the cruel oppression of the rich? What was there in his environment to account for the severity of his denunciations? Hosea learned his power of convicting truth in a very different way. What experiences lay back of his message? Isaiah's special training which furnished him his ability and persuasiveness came through his intimate connection with court life. But what other fundamental experiences made it possible for him to stand as a peer among his fellows? Read again the account of the call in the temple.

3. Gather up the results of your investigation in this day's study. Do you think there was anything so unique in the source of the prophet's message as to make it impossible for men of our day to attempt to draw from similar sources?

4. In every generation there are men whose words burn and throb with a divine power. In times of danger, others rally round them; in times of sorrow, others draw consolation from their sympathy and faith; in great crises, others profit by their wise counsel and direction. These are the prophets, the men with a message that calms and steadies, that inspires and empowers. Where do such men get their message? Surely not from the animal instincts within them, for the message is noble and unselfish; not from the earth, for it is greater than all the visible world. Rather from God Himself,—rather from that within ourselves which is divine, under the daily contact with the source of all things, the Giver of Light and Life.

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

Fourth Day. The Qualifications of the Prophets.

1. The prophets were not vain dreamers. They were neither the sentimental advocates of a Utopian world order, nor impractical agitators for social disintegration. Nor did they belong to that class of men who are blind to all imperfections in existing institutions, and who refuse to tolerate the vision of the ideal either in themselves or in society. Rather they were realists in their keen analysis of existing conditions and yet idealists in their vision of what ought and what ultimately is destined to be.

2. The prophets were men whose ears never grew heavy, whose eyes never grew dim, whose hearts never grew calloused. Rather their minds were ever open and alert for the divine command. They were what the popular priests and princes had refused to be. Education sharpened their perception; contact with criminal neglect only stimulated their conscience. They were men of their own day; but they had such a true sense of perspective that they never forgot the relations of the events of their day to the past and to the future.

3. The prophets were true statesmen. What qualities are essential to true statesmanship? Answer this question by reviewing Nathan's activity at the court of David (Study I., Third Day); Amos' analysis of Israel's sinful civilization and the dangers which impended (Study II., Sixth Day); Isaiah's sermons in the crisis of 701 B. C. (Study XI., First Day).

4. The prophets were, without exception, men of calm, unflinching courage. Often they were discouraged but never daunted. Theirs was the heroism that did all that human activity could do, and then calmly left the outcome to God.

5. The prophets were men of great moral calibre. They not only examined the situation; they pierced through it with accurate analysis, separating the wholesome from the diseased. They were men of noble consecration. They were faithful not only in moments of ecstasy; they were true to God and to men in the hours of desolation and the days of strife. They knew how to be brave in peace as well as in war. They were men who moved among their fellows with untiring patience and persistence. But most of all, the prophets held in their hands the compass which alone could guide the nation into the harbor of God's peace and prosperity. Back of all their noble efforts was an absolute conviction based on their clear vision of God and truth.

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

Fifth Day. The Methods of the Prophets.

1. The methods which the prophets employed to impress their messages upon the hearts of the people were as varied as the exigencies which they had to face. They never sought to save themselves from gossip or ridicule, if through any means which they could employ they might stem the tide of social oppression or political blundering.

2. The method most commonly used was that of public address. Review Amos' Bethel sermons, noting once more the tact with which he gained the attention of the people (Study II., Fourth and Fifth Days). But there were other methods, some of which were concrete and exceedingly dramatic. Recall Hosea's method set forth in Study V., Third Day. What three different methods did Isaiah employ as discussed in his dealings with Ahaz (Study X., Second to Fourth Days)? What object lesson at the crisis of 711 B. C. (Study X., Sixth Day)? Beginning with Amos, the first to commit his sermons to writing, all the remaining prophets of importance in Hebrew history have left us literary records of their work and teachings.

3. The prophetic insight of these heralds of God is hardly more wonderful than the rare skill and effectiveness with which they presented their truth. If their methods were varied, they were also adapted to producing a unified effect. If they were clever, they were equally honest. If they were dramatic, they were also sincere. However undignified—as we of the twentieth century define dignity—the prophets may have been, however much they kept themselves and their advice in the public mind, they never appear to be on parade or to be talking merely to create a sensation. The qualities which always gave them poise were their terrible earnestness, their undisputed consecration and their absolute sincerity. Allegiance to God and to His Kingdom—that was the one mighty motive of their lives. Is it strange that in the end they commanded the minds and hearts of men?

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." Phil. 3:8, 9.

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

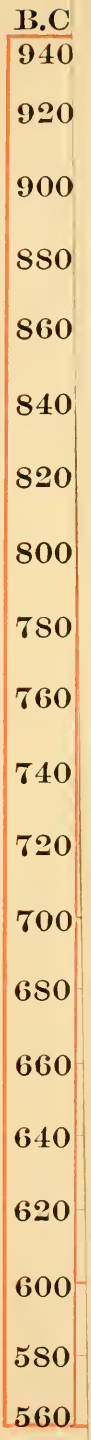
Sixth Day. The Aims of the Prophets.

1. The ultimate aims of the prophets were in general the same. Whatever fundamental difference existed was due to the different crises which they met, and their own varying apprehension of the character and purpose of God in the world. But the immediate aims of the prophets were as individual as the men themselves. These varied with their own personal equation, and with the needs of the particular age which called forth their prophetic utterances.

2. It is not possible to assert that each prophet had one purpose and only one, and yet for the sake of convenience in remembering the essential aim of their messages, it is advisable to try to formulate the central purpose of each. To Amos, God was pre-eminently a righteous God. Righteousness, not worship, was essential in the body politic. Amos' great purpose was to proclaim the doctrine of Israel's responsibility to this God of righteousness. Hosea, in a very different manner, plead with his nation on the basis of God's love. To turn people from their sins by portraying the passionate love of God, to proclaim destruction only as a last resort, when God's mercy had been forever spurned by unrepentant Israel, that was Hosea's message. Isaiah was interested in the state. His great purpose was to impress his countrymen with the fact that God was over all, that the nation should preserve itself inviolate from foreign alliances and social destruction, and have faith in God. Micah was the bitter opponent of the landed proprietors in their oppression of the poor. The destruction of the aristocrats and the capital city was imminent and necessary, he declared, unless there was a fundamental reform in the character and attitude of Judah's leaders.

3. The teachings of the prophets were not primarily doctrinal, but ethical. They contemplated actual human needs and were based on real conditions. Formality and tradition are meaningless, said the prophets, apart from sincere and righteous living. To make vital the truth of God's supremacy, to lead men to acknowledge allegiance to Him, and to impel them to discharge their obligations to their fellow men—this was the purpose which every prophet agonized to realize.

"The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers." John 4:23.



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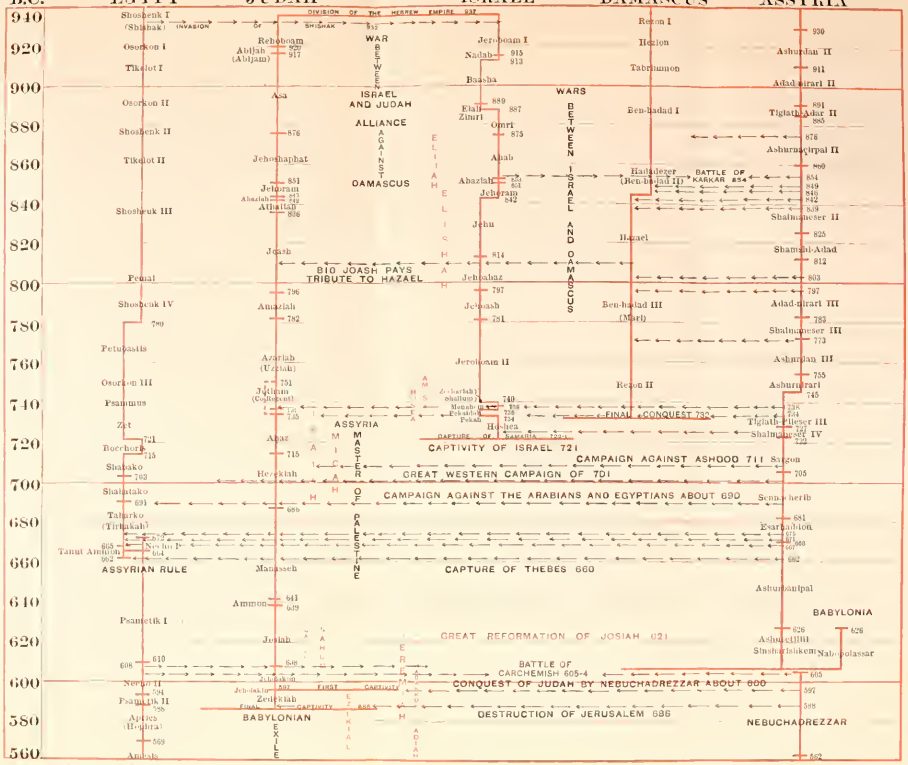

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HEBREW AND CONTEMPORARY CHRONOLOGY FROM THE DIVISION OF THE HEBREW EMPIRE TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHETS.

Seventh Day. The Eternal Need of Prophets.

1. The world cries out for men who have faith. Said Carlyle, "Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, as soon as it believes. . . . The great man was always as lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they, too, would flame." The world will continue to need prophets as long as man is what he is. Past crises have called them forth; coming crises will demand them.

2. Whence will they come? Who will they be? What will be their message? Only the future can answer these questions; but the thoughtful student of the prophets of Israel can be sure of certain conclusions. The prophets of to-day and to-morrow must be men of the hour, men of heart and soul and vitality. They must be men whose bodies have never been vitiated by excess, whose minds are not paralyzed with impure or indifferent thinking, whose hearts have not ceased to beat in sympathy with humankind, whose souls have not grown callous to the touch of God. They must be men of vigor, of dauntless courage, of sound intellect, of sterling integrity, of noble mercy, of Godly fear. They must be men who can see through sham and hypocrisy and trickery, who love the good and hate the evil, who know the right and always do it.

3. Who will these men be? The young men of to-day. To-day is their preparation; to-morrow their call. To-day the hidden years; to-morrow the active struggle. In the coming years the foundations will be revealed, the secret thoughts made known. These prophets of the future,—what are you bequeathing to them? That leader of to-morrow is perhaps your older self. What are you doing for him? His work and his message is in your hands to shape. Are you making it possible for him to be a prophet? It may be that you are killing your future self; perhaps you are fostering an Isaiah.

God of the prophets, Father of Israel, King of our Nation, Mighty Leader of us all to-day, help us to praise Thee by our lives for Thine unchanging love. Be Thou our goal and our mighty helper; our rock and our sure foundation. In love and confidence, in calm judgment and in sober mercy, in earnestness and in untiring work, help us to possess our souls. Strengthen us to do Thy will fearlessly and unerringly, through the power of Him who alone can make us what we ought to be. Amen.

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